

RED DOG DOWN

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INT SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

There are plenty of trendy, hip sports barsiiko, full of young, fit, pretentious, good-looking men and women, but this isn't one of them. But what this bar lacks in ambience it more than makes up for in noise and energy, bred from aging testosterone and the frustration of careers long past. This is where old athletes, mostly men, go to tell lies about the past and get drunk to forget the present.

There are several groupings of MEN, some young, most old. There is a physical similarity among them that is common to athletes everywhere, but there are also differences befitting their sport. Washington DC is one of those cities with teams in the four major professional sports - football, baseball, basketball, and hockey. And there is an intense, yet mostly respectful, competition between them for the favor of the publics' adoration and their discretionary dollars.

In one group of men, EUGENE "RED" O'DELL, is the center of attention because his sport, football, is about to kickoff another season. Training camp has begun, and millions of Americans, inured to the more subtle lures of baseball, will revive their sports obsessions. Red is the most famous of the retired football players in the bar; a former all-star with a sixteen year career, all with the same team, his hometown team, the Redskins. Retired now for thirteen years, Red is 51 but looks older. His dark red hair has thinned, and he carries about twenty pounds too many on his six-foot one-inch frame. His green eyes, normally bright enough to light up a room, are bloodshot and cloudy.

Red is in the middle of a spirited argument with CURLY JOHNSON, 56, a very large, bald man, and BUSTER SMITH, 60, a tall, thin, wiry bundle of energy.

RED

Curly were you watching the same practice I was? How can you prop him like that?

CURLY

You were so busy signing autographs you missed him chasing down Haldane and crushing him.

Buster nods in agreement while Red shakes his head.

RED

Okay, so he's fast and hits hard, but he's got no hands. How many interceptions did he have at the U? Two! Four years at corner and two picks.

CURLY

Coach Dennis will correct that. He went number five, a D-back! They seen something.

RED

You got hands or ya don't. Right Buster?

Buster instinctively looks at his hands, abnormally large for his overall size and responds like the preacher he is.

BUSTER

Word, Dog.

Curly is about to argue but four attractive MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN approach the table and start to faun all over the men. They know each other after years of interaction, starting when they were all young and more foolish. One of the women, MARNIE, 48, sits on Red's lap like she owns him. He rolls his eyes but clearly enjoys the attention as she kisses him, then whispers something in his ear. He shakes his head and she's disappointed but not surprised or unhappy.

CURLY

You're looking fine tonight Marnie, why you still wasting your time on that fossil?

MARNIE

Oh, so I should be wasting it on an older fossil like you?

BUSTER

All-star players get all-star women.

MARNIE

Thank you Buster, you've always been my favorite wide receiver.

They all laugh comfortably, they've done this many times before.

LATER, JJ, a thin, middle-aged man with a perpetual scowl, seemingly appears out of thin air and stands behind Red and cautiously puts a hand on his shoulder. Without acknowledging him, Red pushes Marnie off his lap, stands and follows JJ to the end of the bar. Red moves very gingerly, as if in pain. The others notice but don't comment.

At the bar, we see a careful exchange made between JJ and Red - money for two prescription medicine bottles.

JJ immediately leaves, while Red turns his back to the room and swallows a pill from each of the medicine bottles.

From a little way down the bar, MARCIE JONES, 31, a reporter for the Washington Post, watches Red. When he starts to move back to his table, she moves to intercept him

MARCIE

Hi Red.

He's not happy to see her on many levels - in general because she's a pushy reporter, and specifically he wonders if she saw him buy and take the pills.

RED

Marcie.

He tries to move away but she now has a hold on his arm and she's surprisingly strong.

MARCIE

I was hoping to get your comment on what Tommy Matthews said today about Willis Reynolds.

RED

I didn't hear anything.

MARCIE

He called him a fine young man and that he was sure that the legal process would support Willis' position on the domestic abuse charge made by his ex-girlfriend.

She watches him for a reaction, which he is careful to hide.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

But there is, as you know, video of him beating on her in her dorm.

She stares at him until he has to say something.

RED

I guess different conclusions can be made about anything.

MARCIE

Like what?

RED

Well the video doesn't show who started it. He said she started it.

MARCIE

Christ Red, she's a woman maybe five foot five, a hundred twenty pounds, he's six six two fifty five. He broke her jaw - put her in the hospital! Doesn't matter who started it.

Red is in a box - he doesn't like that the team drafted Willis, but he doesn't want to say anything to the press.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I know you and the GM are friends, played together, but you have to admit that this was a terrible draft pick. Sends a horrible message.

RED

Nice to see you Marcie.

He pulls away from her and returns to the table, moving a little better. He sits and tries to re-engage as if nothing had happened. He does glance over to the bar and sees Marcie stare at him, shaking her head.

LATER. Red stands to go take a piss and has to pause a moment to allow his knees to stabilize under him and let his equilibrium adjust from the impact of the alcohol and the pain pills.

Curly notices Red's unsteadiness.

CURLY

You okay there Red? Need your walker?

RED

No, but I need my cane to beat your ugly head in.

Red tries to walk with confidence but the pain of the effort is clear on his face. He tries to stretch his back, and after a few steps, he loses his balance, catching himself on the back of a chair at the next table. This is the MLB table. CLUTCH, an old man with thick glasses who sits on the chair, peers up at Red.

CLUTCH

Hey Red, how'r things at the jock strap? I heard you were offering yoga now - ol' Paddy woulda loved that.

Red tries to cover his ignorance, while ignoring the sarcasm and the thinly veiled criticism.

RED
Gotta keep up with the times
Clutch, you should try it.

Red tries his best to look strong and in control of his body as he heads off to the bathroom. He doesn't succeed.

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Red stands at the urinal and fumbles with his zipper. He has a moment of panic that he won't be able to do it in time. He doesn't quite make it.

RED
Damn.

Red finishes, zips up, washes his hands. He looks around to make sure he is alone, then splashes some water on his pants. Standing at the hand dryer, he bends his hips forward to let the hot air dry his pants.

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

As Red crosses the room, he glances down at his crotch to see what shows. Satisfied that it is okay, he looks up just as he bumps into DEE O'DELL, 45, gorgeous with jet black hair and dangerous blue eyes.

RED
Sorry, I -

Red's body stiffens and his face hardens as he realizes it's Dee. She responds with a wicked, seductive smile, then a quick kiss on his cheek, a tease, before she turns to the YOUNG BALLPLAYER next to her and kisses him passionately. Red struggles not to react and quickly moves away.

Curly, Buster, and Marnie watch the interaction between Red and Dee.

BUSTER
Hey, ain't that Dog's wife?

MARNIE
Ex-wife!

She's got no shame, parading around
in here. She should stay at her
f'ing country club.

CURLY

She could be that boy's momma.

Marnie is about to say something, but Red arrives and plops
down, upset, clumsy. He looks around gauging reactions,
forces a smile.

RED

Shots for everyone!

LATER. Dozens of empty shot glasses litter the table.
Everyone's speech has slowed, slurred.

At the bar, Dee laughs and sexually teases her Young
Ballplayer.

Red steals a look at Dee and then seems to notice Marnie for
the first time. He whispers in her ear.

RED (CONT'D)

What say we get out of here?

She looks like she's won the Powerball lottery. She's waited
a long time for this.

MARNIE

I thought you'd never ask. I got
just what you need, baby.

EXT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Red and Marnie stumble out of the bar. She has her arm
wrapped possessively around his waist. He doesn't mind
because he's wobbly on his feet and fuzzy in his head. His
black Range Rover is parked in front and he opens the door
for her. She pulls him to her for a passionate kiss before
she gets into the car.

INT. MARNIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The small urban apartment is full of memorabilia from all of
the sports teams in town - the Redskins, Wizards, Capitals,
and Nationals. But the majority are from football, and more
than a few feature Red in his playing days. Not quite a
shrine but it clearly reflects the obsession of a long-time
sports groupie.

Red and Marnie rush through the front door, and she pulls him immediately off to the bedroom. His eagerness has lessened and he seems reluctant, but she's in control.

After a moment.

RED (O.S.)
Can you turn the light off?

MARNIE (O.S.)
Oh, no baby, I've waited too long
for this to do it in the dark.

SOUNDS of clothing, some ripping, bodies falling on a bed, groans, passionate anticipation, then quiet. Finally.

MARNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What the hell?

A few moments later.

MARNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You're not that drunk.

Sounds of more activity on the bed.

MARNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
God damn it Red!

INT. MARNIE'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marnie and Red lie on their backs on the queen-sized bed, and they both stare at the ceiling. She's frustrated, angry. He's embarrassed.

EXT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER BUILDING - DAY

The three-story building, built in 1954, occupies a seemingly precarious place between a large office building and the construction site for a new condominium building in the Adams Morgan section of Washington. In the middle of the building is the entrance to O'Dell's Athletic Supporter Fitness Club. The name is stenciled on the large glass windows in a style that is reminiscent of a gym from the 1930s.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

The coffeemaker has a timer, and now 8:30 AM, it turns on. The kitchen is empty, clean, with no personal touches except for the large Redskins coffee mug waiting by the coffeemaker.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Red swats his bedside alarm off. He doesn't want to get up, but he has to. He's obviously hung-over and in pain. After struggling to sit up, he tries to stand but dizziness, nausea, and pain overwhelm him. But his bladder is bursting, and he doesn't want to wet the bed, so he tries again. Using furniture for support, he stumbles to the bathroom

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Red finishes peeing and stands in front of the mirror. He doesn't like what he sees. A image of Marnie's angry sweaty face flashes in front of him. From the medicine cabinet he takes one of many prescription bottles and takes two pills. After a moment he takes two more from another bottle. It's now empty, and he throws it into the waste basket.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Red lies on his bed. He desperately wants to go back to sleep, but he can't. Frustrated, he stands up, but too fast, forgetting the pain, the nausea, that comes with such an effort. He sways and then plops back down.

INT. MARNIE'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Marnie wakes and immediately checks for Red. He's gone. She's more frustrated than angry.

INT. MARNIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Marnie, in her robe, sits on the couch with her coffee in a Nationals mug. After a sip, she picks up her cell phone and starts to type a message.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

It's an old apartment as evidenced by the windows and structural detail of the walls, ceiling, doorways. The furniture is mostly leather and all old. It is clearly a man's apartment with plenty of clues to Red's professional sports career. One wall is devoted to family photos that show a young Red with his parents. A high school picture of Red shows him with his prom date, Sandy, a cute blond, and next to that is a wedding photo of him and Sandy in a chapel that has to be in Las Vegas. Almost hidden in the corner is another wedding photo of Red, maybe mid-twenties, and a dark-haired beauty, also getting married.

Hanging on the other walls are striking black-and-white photographs. They are sports themed but not typical action shots. They show moments of intense emotion, positive and negative. Many are poignant portraits of men and women who suffer and rejoice at the altar of sports obsession. One such photo is a portrait of Red's father in his Pittsburgh Pirates baseball uniform. He doesn't have a look of victory but of an understanding of the price paid for victory.

Red, dressed in sweat pants and a Pink Floyd t-shirt, moves gingerly across the room like his knees might buckle at any moment. He disappears into the kitchen and reemerges a moment later with the big coffee mug. He pauses to take a sip of coffee, but it's in his left hand, and he winces as he tries to lift it to drink. It's the pain in his left elbow. He switches the mug to his right hand as he reaches the front door.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Red closes the door to his apartment, which has a brass number "1" on it. As he shuffles down the wide hallway to the elevator at the other end, we see the door across the hall with a sign "Office". There are other doors, one on each side of the hallway.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

The elevator door opens in a corner of the large room that occupies the entire ground floor of the building. Red hesitates before getting out.

In the front center is a circular counter that serves as the check-in and operations desk.

The rest of the room is packed with exercise equipment of all types. None of it looks new, and, in fact, a lot of it looks very old, but everything is well maintained. The only signs of modernity are the large, flat-screen, television monitors that hang everywhere.

Hanging on the walls are more black-and-white photographs, similar in style to the ones in Red's apartment.

Behind the desk stands LA TICIA JONES, 51, African American, the club's manager, fitness trainer and physical therapist. She finishes signing in a MEMBER and then notices Red as he approaches the counter. She's concerned - he's looked worse but there is a troubling trend of bad days.

LA TICIA
Are you okay?

He nods carefully, it hurts.

RED
Tish do we offer yoga?

LA TICIA
Yes, you know that. I hired the
teacher a couple of months ago.

RED
And we have students?

LA TICIA
Not too many yet, but they really
like Sharon.

He looks confused.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
The yoga instructor. She also
teaches tai chi.

Maybe he knows what that is, he's not sure.

A HIGH SCHOOL BOY on crutches arrives to rehab his torn ACL.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
Red, Kim is late, and I need to
work with Carl. Can you man the
desk for a while?

It's not clear whether he really comprehends, but he answers.

RED
Sure.

La Ticia takes the High School Boy to the part of the floor
that is dedicated to free weights. He begins to stretch as
she puts weights on the bar for the bench press.

Red sits quietly at the center counter and doesn't
acknowledge KIM, 24, the morning desk clerk, as she arrives.

KIM
Good morning Mr. O'Dell, sorry I'm
late.

Red doesn't respond, and she is unsure what to do. He scares
her, more than a little. She tries to get busy straightening
up things on the counter, including the sign that reads:
"Daily Memberships Available". Red's only reaction is to take
out a prescription pill bottle and take more pills. She
slides her chair a little further away from him.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Red is alone at the center desk. His eyes are almost closed.

There are MEMBERS on about a third of the machines. All the televisions monitors are tuned to a sports show - all the ESPN networks, Fox Sports, NBC Sports, etc. No news networks anywhere.

A MAN, 35, approaches the desk. He doesn't look like he belongs there - too young, too fit, too intense.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, is there any way to get Fox
News on a monitor over there by the
treadmills.

Red slowly comes alert, gives him a good, hard stare that doesn't seem to phase the confident Young Man.

RED

We don't show that crap here. Rot's
your mind.

YOUNG MAN

I spent twenty bucks for a day
membership and I want to watch what
I want.

Red looks like he's about to come over the counter at the guy but he manages to contain himself. He reached into a drawer and pulls out a twenty-dollar bill.

RED

Here's your money back. Stay and
watch sports or get the hell out.

YOUNG MAN

I want to talk to the manager.

RED

I'm the owner, will that do?

The Young Man sputters, no comeback, then storms off toward the locker rooms.

The interaction has taken a lot out of Red and he reaches for his bottle of pills. He stops when he notices La Tisha standing there.

LA TISHA

You okay? That guy seemed upset.

RED

Maybe that deal with the Ritz
Carlton isn't such a great idea.
Our types of clientele don't really
jive.

LA TICIA

We need the business.

You look terrible, why don't you go
get some breakfast?

Red doesn't move or respond. To break an awkward silence, La
Tisha looks at her watch.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)

And can you meet with a swim coach,
Bob Hampton, at ten thirty?

RED

Sure, why?

LA TICIA

He might want to rent some time, a
lot of time, in the pool.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

The 25-meter, 6-lane swimming pool is in the basement. The
room is dark - some would call it depressing. The only light
comes from a few fluorescent fixtures along the walls and
four half-casement windows along two walls that let in some
daylight. A small little office, no larger than a closet, has
a window out to the pool.

Two OLD SWIMMERS swim laps in the pool, slow, methodically.

ABBY MENDELSON, 20, the lifeguard, sits on the lifeguards
chair, alert and watching but also clearly mentally somewhere
else. She's a very pretty girl who makes no attempt to
highlight it. There's an obvious Asian heritage in her
features and her dark hair, but her eyes are pale blue.

Red enters with COACH BOB, late 40s, and they stand at the
head of the pool. Coach Bob is not impressed, but he's
pleasantly surprised. They walk part way around the pool,
stopping near Abby.

COACH BOB

This is nice, I didn't realize you
had this down here.

RED
Best kept secret in town.

COACH BOB
What are your hours?

RED
Six AM until 10 PM, every day. Rain
or shine.

Coach Bob smiles at Red's attempt at humor.

COACH BOB
I need as many lanes as you can
spare from six to eight in the
morning and then three to ten in
the afternoon, evening. It would be
for maybe a month while they repair
the pool at Brandywine.

RED
I guess you could have three and
maybe more depending on demand at
the time. As you can see, right now
you could probably have four. I
think our biggest use is afternoons
with kids from the Blair Center,
over on R street.

COACH BOB
Great. What will it cost me?

RED
Let's go up to the office, and we
can work that out.

They leave, and Abby clearly has been listening to their
conversation.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

The large room on the second floor has great daylight, which
comes from large windows on one wall, reflecting off wall-to-
wall mirrors on the three interior walls. Along one wall are
the step pads for the step-aerobics class. In a corner is the
sound system that softly plays CLASSICAL MUSIC with a
distinct Asian sound.

SHARON MENDELSON, 42, leads a small group of mostly middle
aged YOGA WOMEN through some basic yoga poses. She tries to
hide her good looks but can't hide her intelligent, bright
blue eyes. Tall and slender, she moves with confidence,
strength and flexibility.

INT. SPORTS BAR - DAY

About half the tables are occupied by a younger, more diverse, and different CROWD than at night. Sandwiches, burgers, salads, mostly soft drinks, iced tea, not many beers.

Red and Curly eat at the bar. Red is on his fifth or sixth cup of coffee. He shifts his body around, his back isn't comfortable on the bar stool. Curly notices.

CURLY

We could sit at a table, for your back.

RED

We always sit at the bar.

CURLY

We always did two-a-day practices too, but things change.

Red considers but then takes another bite of his burger.

CURLY (CONT'D)

And you heard what they just gave girl-friend abuser Reynolds? Twenty-five mil guaranteed.

Red hadn't heard, he's shocked.

RED

That's fucking insane.

What was yours?

CURLY

You're god-damn hilarious Red. I never got no guaranteed money. I got two grand to sign, two per week for camp and twenty-five hundred per game. I wasn't a hot-shot prospect like you.

RED

I remember Riggins got three-hundred grand, that seemed like a fortune. Twice as much as Joe or Ken who I ...

Red's mind wanders off to the past. It goes from positive to negative, quickly.

CURLY

Yeah, we live in a different world.

Red's back, serious.

RED

You having any issues with your memory?

CURLY

Course, we all do, too many blows the head.

And, you know, that other thing happens to all of us.

RED

What other thing?

Curly is now cautious, not sure whether to continue, but...

CURLY

You know, what happened, or didn't happen last night with Marnie.

Red stiffens - the image of Marnie's naked body again flashes through his head.

RED

What are you talking about?

CURLY

You were really loaded, no disgrace in that. And Marnie, everyone knows she over-reacts to stuff.

Red would like to drop it, but he's confused, upset.

RED

How the hell do you know?

CURLY

She tweeted it this morning. But hey, I'm sure she doesn't have that many followers.

Red glances around the room. Is it just his imagination or does it seem like everyone is looking at him? He turns back around to the BARTENDER.

RED

Rick. Beer please. And a shot - make it a double.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

The CREW mills around the set for the Redskins Magazine show. The HOST chats with TOMMY MATTHEWS, 62, the General Manager of the Redskins. The FLOOR DIRECTOR paces and keeps glancing at his watch as he turns to the SET PA.

FLOOR DIRECTOR
Where the hell is O'Dell?

The Set PA looks nervous as the Floor Director glares at her.

FLOOR DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Have you seen him?

SET PA
I, I think he's in make-up.

FLOOR DIRECTOR
Tell him he's got two minutes to
get his ass in here.

INT. MAKE-UP ROOM - DAY

The MAKE-UP PERSON tries desperately but unsuccessfully to compensate for Red's tired, red eyes and sagging face. Red stares into the mirror, not liking what he sees and trying to stay awake.

The Set PA enters and hesitates, hoping not to be the messenger who gets shot.

SET PA
Mr. O'Dell you're on in two
minutes.

Red doesn't respond except to take two more pills.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Red slowly enters and approaches the set where the Host and Tommy Matthews sit. Red takes his chair, next to the Host, facing the GM. An AUDIO TECH quickly attaches Red's lavalier microphone as the Floor Director paces.

FLOOR DIRECTOR
Ready. Five, four, three

He mouths "two" and "one" as he points to the Host.

HOST

Welcome to another edition of Redskins Magazine. This week we look at the opening of training camp and the recent signing of Willis Reynolds, second round draft choice from LSU. I'm joined by my co-host Red O'Dell, and we welcome the General Manager for the Redskins, Tommy Matthews.

The Host looks like he's about to toss it to Red but stops when he sees Red's vacant look. After a quick glance up to the control booth, he addresses the GM

HOST (CONT'D)

Mr. Matthews thank you for joining us. We know that you've only been on the job for a few months, but what can you tell us about the controversy, the legal situation with Willis Reynolds? The team sure could use some help this year at running back.

GENERAL MANAGER

I can tell you that we believe that we can quickly get beyond the recent ... uhm distractions.

HOST

Distractions being the filing of assault charges against him by the Baton Rouge police for his alleged assault on his former girlfriend?

GENERAL MANAGER

Yes. We've done our due diligence and we're sure this will not be -

Red suddenly comes to life as he interrupts the GM.

RED

For fucks sake Tommy, when did you become such an ass licker? Chesterfield fired Bucky right before the draft; then ran his own draft, and fucked it up. So now he has to live with it. Bucky wouldn't draft Reynolds because everyone knew the kid had issues and now we know how bad they are.

(MORE)

RED (CONT'D)

So you shoulda cut your loses and
dumped the kid before he becomes
toxic in the locker room. You can't
condone this kind of behavior. But
no, you give him a twenty-five
million dollar guaranteed contract.

Red is loud and passionate and almost yelling as he finishes. The GM and the Host are stunned, speechless. Red looks around and gauges the reactions. He's feeling sick, so he yanks off his microphone and walks away, out of the studio.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM

Red is on an elliptical machine, and he attacks it like it's a mortal enemy. He's obviously high, hung over/drunken and in pain, but he doesn't stop.

LATER. Standing next to a treadmill, he swallows a couple of pills, then begins to jog. He starts to sway, then stumbles, but he isn't able to grab the railing. He collapses - unconscious. His head hits the railing as he falls. And the running-belt dumps his limp body off the back of the machine.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Two EMTs wheel Red into the emergency room, where a DOCTOR takes control.

DOCTOR

What do we have?

EMT

Likely drug overdose according to
people on scene. Also hit his head
pretty good falling off a
treadmill.

DOCTOR

He looks familiar.

EMT

Red O'Dell, played for the
Redskins. He's been here before.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM, TREATMENT ROOM - NIGHT

A team of DOCTORS and NURSES attend to Red. It's urgent but under control, they're professionals.

DOCTOR
Not sure how this guy is surviving
with all the crap in his system.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A NURSE records the readings from the monitors hooked up to Red, who sleeps on the bed. Several bags of fluid hang on a pole; each bag has a tube that leads to a needle in his arm.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Red carefully opens his eyes. He's not surprised to be where he is, he's been there before. The sounds, the smells are familiar. Nor does it surprise him is to see his mother sitting on the chair next to the bed.

EUNICE O'DELL is eighty-four but spry and fit as a fifty year-old. Her mostly white hair has a few stubborn red highlights. Born and raised in Ireland, she still speaks with a noticeable accent.

RED
Mom.

EUNICE
Eugene are you so determined to
send me to my grave?

RED
No mom.

EUNICE
Well then what are you doing with
these drugs? Didn't your daddy, God
rest his soul...

She crosses herself.

EUNICE (CONT'D)
... didn't his passing teach you
anything?

Red really doesn't want to hear this now. His mother's guilt trip is hard enough when he's not in a hospital bed, feeling weak and nauseous.

RED
Why are you here mom?

EUNICE

I was swimming at the club when I hear the siren and the EMT. I figured it was for you. It looked very bad for a while. Thought we were going to lose you.

And I'm your mother. You don't have anyone else to speak for you.

The sadness in his eyes acknowledges this.

LATER. Dr. NICHOLS finishes examining Red, and carefully puts his stuff in his bag before he turns to address him.

DR. NICHOLS

I'll save my breath and spare you the lecture. But this was a very close one. Good thing your heart's strong, and stubborn.

I don't suppose you'll tell me where you get all these pills.

RED

I'm not doing anything illegal.

DR. NICHOLS

No, just stupid.

Red has known the doctor for a long time and feels comfortable with him.

RED

Everything we try works and then it doesn't, or it takes more and more to deal with the pain.

DR. NICHOLS

That's normal, and we can monitor that. But put booze on top and...

Any unusual stress?

Red hesitates.

RED

I can't get it up anymore.

DR. NICHOLS

That's probably caused by the alcohol and pills. It should come back.

Red doesn't share his optimism, shrugs his shoulders.

DR. NICHOLS (CONT'D)
But, I think we've reached the
point where the benefits of any
further procedures are far
outweighed by potential side
effects.

The doctor is concerned; he had given the same news to Red's
father years ago.

DR. NICHOLS (CONT'D)
Red, I can't go through this with
another stubborn, self destructive,
O'Dell who won't listen to advice -
to reason. You need to go into
rehab, get some professional help,
or ...

Red tries to lighten the mood.

RED
Are you gonna dump me doc?

Dr. Nichols doesn't say anything, but that is indeed his
meaning.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The club is closed and dark, only the night security lights
are on. If dead athletes had ghosts, they would be
comfortable here. A dark figure slowly shuffles around. Red
looks tired and defeated. Memories and ghosts flash through
his mind:

YOUNG RED, 8, stands next to his father, PADDY O'DELL, 40,
who tells a story to a group of YOUNG PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL
PLAYERS.

Paddy encourages YOUNG RED, 12, to grind out one more pushup;
then shows him proper technique for a bench press; then a
squat.

TEENAGE RED, 15, watches Paddy chatting up a PRETTY YOUNG
WOMAN. The Pretty Woman transforms into Marnie, causing Red
to exit memory lane.

Red's in the weight section, which looks the same as his
forty year-old memories. He goes to the back corner where his
initials, dates and numbers are still written on the wall. A
progression of weights that he lifted as a kid/teen. The
ghostly voice of Paddy swirls around him.

PADDY (V.O.)
One more, one more. You'll never be
bigger than them, so you've got to
be stronger, work harder.
No pain, no gain.

INT. THE BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, LOBBY - NIGHT

The institutional look of the lobby is partially offset by framed black-and-white photos of kids playing. The style is the same as the photos in Red's apartment and the club. A large desk stands guard to the hallway leading into the orphanage.

Abby sits behind the desk and intently draws on a page in a bound journal. We can't see what she draws.

Suddenly something grabs her attention. A very faint voice.

BECKY (O.S.)
Abby? Abby?

INT. THE BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, DORM ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark except for two small night-lights in floor outlets on each side of the room. There are six small beds and on each one a CHILD is asleep. Except for one bed where BECKY, 5, sits up with the covers pulled up around her neck. She looks frightened but immediately smiles when she sees Abby at the door. She gets excited as Abby comes and sits down next to her. Abby speaks quietly so to not wake the other girls.

ABBY
What's wrong Becky?

BECKY
I had a bad dream. There was a bad
clown right over there.

She points to the end of the room where there are six old wardrobes.

ABBY
I told you not to watch that movie.

BECKY
I know but Suzie made me.

ABBY
No one makes you do anything.
You're a strong, smart little girl.

BECKY

Mrs. Woodson makes me do things.

ABBY

Yes, but good things and you should listen to her. Now go back to sleep.

BECKY

Will you tell me the story of Krishna and the tiger?

ABBY

That's not a good story for going to sleep, but I have another one. When Krishna was five years old -

BECKY

Just like me.

ABBY

Yes, just like you.

INT. THE BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, LOBBY - NIGHT

Abby is back working on her drawing. Now we can see that it looks like a page for a graphic novel. A tall, very fit, almost muscular, dark-haired young woman fights, martial arts style, against the thing that Abby now draws. It looks like it's going to be a clown.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Red stares at the pill bottles that line the shelf in the medicine cabinet. He desperately wants to take some, but instead slams the door shut.

A moment passes, then he reopens the cabinet. Pausing, he finally reaches for a bottle of Advil and takes two.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Red is in serious pain as he hobbles to the bed and sits. Carefully, he lies down and tries to relax, but he just can't get comfortable. He keeps looking over to the bathroom, then gets angry at himself and turns away.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Red stands there again, fighting himself.

DR. NICHOLS (V.O.)
No one can go cold turkey by
themselves. You have to get help or
this is going to kill you.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Red has two pill bottles on the table next to the bed along
with a glass of water.

EUNICE (V.O.)
Your father just wasn't strong
enough.

RED
Shit.

He take one pill from each bottle, then collapses back on the
bed. Eyes wide open, he stares at the ceiling.

PADDY (V.O.)
Deal with it Gene, I won't have my
boy be some sissy little girl.

EXT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, LOUNGE - DAY

The small lounge is in the corner of the first floor. It has
a large Keurig coffee maker and a cooler with bottles of
water and various kinds of drinks, juices, but no sodas.

Red looks like he hasn't slept at all as he fumbles with the
coffee maker. La Ticia comes over, takes the water container
out, fills it, and replaces it. He gives her a weak smile.
His smile disappears when he sees Sharon sitting nearby,
trying not to notice.

LA TICIA
Aaron Trilling called for you.

Red grimaces.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
Said he'd been trying to reach you
but you weren't answering your
phone. He's glad you're okay... but
also said that you're fired from
the show.

He shrugs, not unexpected news.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
I agree with what you said. But I'm
sorry, I know you liked that gig.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby swims lap after lap with very strong freestyle strokes. The only thing about her technique that doesn't look professional is her turns.

Coach Bob enters the pool area. He watches her and is visibly impressed but then cringes slightly as she makes her awkward turns.

LATER. About twelve TEEN SWIMMERS are in four lanes as Coach Bob and BRAD, 21, an assistant coach, watch them and offer instruction, comments, tips.

Abby continues to swim laps, seemingly not tiring or slowing down. Brad notices and turns to Coach Bob.

BRAD
How long has she been doing that?
That's a pretty fast pace.

COACH BOB
Since before I arrived. She hasn't
stopped.

BRAD
Who is she?

COACH BOB
The lifeguard for the club. I don't
know her name.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Red sits at the counter, struggling to hold it together. Kim has put as much space between them as she can. La Ticia walks by and notices. She motions for Kim to come over to talk to her.

LA TICIA
You okay?

KIM
Oh sure.

She realizes that La Ticia isn't buying it, so she whispers to her.

KIM (CONT'D)
He scares the hell out of me.

La Ticia tries not to laugh; she knows Kim is serious.

LA TICIA
Don't worry, his bark is worse than
his bite.

KIM
This is different, there's no bark
or bite, it's like he's not in
there. He usually doesn't remember
my name, but now he doesn't even
try.

La Ticia nods, then goes over and stands in front of Red.
There's no sense of recognition for a few moments. She begins
to worry. Finally...

RED
Tish.

LA TICIA
Red, glad to see you. How are you
doing?

RED
Another day above ground.

LA TICIA
That's my line, get your own.

A hint of a smile from him.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
I have an idea for you to try.

She waits for a response. Nothing.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
You know Sharon, the new yoga
teacher? Well, she's also an
acupuncturist and says that it can
work wonders for pain - back,
knees, even headaches.

Red, who hoped that she had a better idea, shakes his head.

RED
The last thing I need is some
voodoo quack doctor poking needles
into me.

LA TICIA

Jesus Red, join the twenty-first century. She's been treating Carl for his knee, and his mom is even more of a conservative fossil than you are. He feels a lot better. What have you got to lose?

RED

Self respect?

She shakes her head and retreats - to fight another day.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Red tries to walk on a treadmill, but the pain is too great, and he soon stops. He looks around to make sure no one has seen his failure. His eyes meet La Ticia's. She shakes her head, but there's no other interaction between them.

He quickly hobbles over to the elevator.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Red enters his apartment and immediately goes to the dining table where he has laid out all of his prescription bottles. There are a dozen or more, arranged in a circle. He sits and stares at them, reaches for one and pulls back, repeats. Finally he grabs one, struggles with the top, and then takes two pills. He leans back on the chair, exhausted from the struggle with himself.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sharon instructs a small group in Tai Chi. Most of them are OLDER MEN and WOMEN including CONSTANCE, 85, and MARVIN, 90. The only young person is STEVIE, 30, whose slight build is very flexible but not strong.

The slow, careful movements are beautiful in their simplicity. Most of the students seem peaceful yet energized as their bodies do things that would normally be uncomfortable for them.

Sharon doesn't notice Red as he stands at the door and watches. When she turns that way, he quickly leaves.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby uses two lanes of the pool to work with YOUNG BOYS and GIRLS, including Becky, from the Blair Center. She uses fun but structured activities to get them comfortable in the water and learn how to swim. Becky shows the most promise as she swims a lap of freestyle and backstroke.

In the other four lanes, Coach Bob and Brad work with about twenty MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS on a more rigid, traditional swim practice, which they have outlined on a portable white-board. They both notice what Abby is doing with the young children and seem to be impressed with how she relates to them and makes it fun.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SMALL CLASSROOM - DAY

This classroom is not as large as the other and doesn't have any mirrors. The floor is completely covered with a tumbling mat and along the walls hang all sorts of gear - hula hoops, jump ropes, frisbees, etc. And on the floor are several bins full of all kinds of balls.

Red and nine or ten YOUNG KIDS, boys and girls, from The Blair Center are engaged in a exuberant game of dodge ball. Red is a different person with them. He can almost ignore the pain as he jokes and plays with them.

He doesn't notice Sharon as she pauses at the door and watches. A smile appears on her face.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Red watches a DVD on his 55" flatscreen television. It's the 1997 NFL Pro Bowl game in Aloha Stadium, Honolulu. All his pain pill bottles are on the coffee table in front of him.

EXT. ALOHA STADIUM - DAY

We see the PLAYERS being introduced to the large CROWD.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - DAY

Two ANNOUNCERS are in the broadcast booth.

ANNOUNCER ONE

Red O'Dell from the Washington Redskins is starting at strong safety.

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER ONE (CONT'D)
It's his fifth Pro Bowl at age 30
and considered a surprise selection
because of his injuries during the
year.

ANNOUNCER TWO
But he never missed a game. His
teammates marvel at his ability to
play through pain.

ANNOUNCER ONE
We spoke with Red yesterday and
asked him what motivates him to
keep going.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

A younger Red (30), sits across from Announcer One. There is
a camera pointed at each man.

RED
My old man wanted me to play
baseball like he did, but I was
determined to go football. So he
told me that I'd better learn to
deal with pain. I don't think he
thought I could do it.

ANNOUNCER ONE
Your dad, Paddy O'Dell, played
shortstop for the Pirates for many
years. Is he here?

RED
No, he unfortunately couldn't make
it. He's got some health issues.

ANNOUNCER ONE
Well, we wish him well. And good
luck tomorrow.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - DAY

Back to the two Announcers in the booth.

ANNOUNCER TWO
Red is a lot like his dad, who I
know well. They both beat very long
odds to achieve successful
professional careers.
(MORE)

ANNOUNCER TWO (CONT'D)
And Paddy certainly suffered more
than his share of injuries for a
baseball player.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Red pauses the DVD. He looks miserable. He reaches for a bottle, pauses, grimaces, then angrily uses his arm to sweep them all off the table.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

The last of the YOGA STUDENTS leave the classroom and Sharon sits in a lotus position looking for a music selection on her phone - Dvorak's violin concerto in A minor, Op.53. She seems lost in the music until she senses that someone is there.

Red stands hesitantly, unsure, at the door. He feels like he's interrupting a very private moment. He turns to leave.

SHARON
Hello.

Red pauses and turns back.

RED
Hi.

SHARON
Do you need something?

Red almost laughs - the list is so long.

RED
I'm Red.

SHARON
I know. Sharon Mendelson.

RED
I wanted... well La Ticia
mentioned... I wondered ...

He just can't get it out.

SHARON
Why don't you sit and relax, that
might help.

She points to a spot on the floor next to her. He looks around, but there are no chairs in the room. He tries to walk and not show his pain, but it's clearly there.

As he tries to bend his knees to sit on the floor, he loses his balance and only stops his fall by putting his hand heavily on her shoulder.

RED
I'm so sorry.

SHARON
No problem.

She stands to talk.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Should we go down to the lounge? Or
we can sit on those.

She points to the step aerobics pads which are stacked up in the corner of the room. He can't make a decision, so she goes to arrange the pads to make two stacks for sitting.

Then they sit in silence while Red recovers his equilibrium and his composure. She doesn't press, seems very happy to sit and listen to the music.

RED
What is this?

SHARON
Violin concerto by Dvorak.

RED
It's nice. Relaxing.

She nods, patient.

RED (CONT'D)
So you've been teaching here, for
us, for a few weeks now?

SHARON
Over two months actually.

RED
Really?

Another nod, smile.

RED (CONT'D)
How's it going?

SHARON
Great. Nice people and very eager
students. Mostly older.

RED

That's the nature of the neighborhood now. At least until the new condos and apartments are finished and then ... Well, most of these people won't be able to afford to live there.

Years ago this area was full of families, kids, playgrounds...

She watches as he goes off into his memories for a moment. Then he's back and proceeds very hesitantly.

RED (CONT'D)

Tish, La Ticia, mentioned that you also do acupuncture.

SHARON

Yes, I got my license from the city last month.

RED

So you've only been doing it for a month?

SHARON

Oh, no, I studied and practiced for almost five years in China. But I have to have a license from the city to practice here. It's a piece of paper, wrapped in a lot of red tape, and a big fee.

RED

Oh, sure. Typical DC government.

So this stuff helps with different pains?

SHARON

Yes, Traditional Chinese Medicine has good success with many types of pain - joints, muscles, head, back. What pains do you have?

RED

Oh God, it would be easier to tell you what doesn't hurt.

So you just stick a needle in there and that's it, pain gone?

She laughs.

SHARON

Oh, I wish it were so simple.

Acupuncture uses very small, thin needles, but TCM is more. It include other techniques, like cupping. And it's also about your diet, eating right, getting proper sleep.

RED

I'd kill for proper sleep.

He tries to keep it light, but it isn't, and she knows it.

RED (CONT'D)

But I'm not sure that I'm ready to be a big pin cushion.

SHARON

Well, we only work on one thing at a time and that normally involves eight to ten needles. What's the most critical, debilitating pain you have?

RED

That's easy, lower back. Hard to walk, can't bend over, shooting pain up my leg.

SHARON

And what have you done so far?

RED

What haven't I done? Operations, three. Chiropractor, quack. Big needles with steroid injections.

SHARON

Well, I couldn't promise anything, but lower back pain is a very common ailment that acupuncture and other treatments can help. Not always eliminate, but help.

She pauses, then carefully adds.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Enough to not need pain medication.

He looks at her, not surprised she knows - he did collapse in the club a few days earlier. He's actually happy that she knows and doesn't seem at all judgmental.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

The club is busy with MEMBERS using the equipment.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Coach Bob and Bryan work with their Middle School Swimmers in four lanes.

Abby works with her kids. Becky is frustrated with her lack of success on the breaststroke.

ABBY

I'm sorry Becky but I just don't know that stroke, or how to teach it.

BECKY

But I saw it on TV, and look, they're doing it.

She points to the kids with Coach Bob.

BECKY (CONT'D)

It's so beautiful.

Abby laughs.

ABBY

Well, okay, we'll keep at it. I'll see if I can find some information. But for now let's do what we know.

So they go back to the freestyle and backstrokes.

Abby doesn't notice, but Brad has been watching, listening to all this.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is sparsely furnished and divided in half by a tall folding screen that is decorated with Chinese scenes and symbols. One half of the room has a couch, an easy chair, and coffee table. In the other half, behind the screen, are two chairs and a padded bed, like a doctor's examination bed.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sharon stands at the stove cooking vegetables in a wok. A pan of brown rice simmers on another burner.

SHARON
Abby, dinner is ready.

ABBY (O.S.)
I'm not really hungry mom.

SHARON
You need to eat. You've been
looking tired and run down. You're
supposed to be able to sleep when
you're there.

Abby enters and plops down at the small table.

ABBY
Yeah, mostly I can, but the kids
have all sorts of bad dreams and
stuff.

Sharon nods but isn't totally buying that.

SHARON
I'm sure, but I've also seen how
much work you've been doing on that
comic book

ABBY
It's a graphic novel Mom.

Sharon nods as she serves the food and joins Abby at the
table. They eat in silence for a minute.

SHARON
Have you thought any more about
going back to school? It's still
not too late for this fall.

Abby raises her eyebrows - this conversation again.

ABBY
Some.

SHARON
Well?

ABBY
I'm happy doing what I'm doing.

SHARON
But there's no future in it. Well,
maybe the comic - graphic novel -
but not lifeguarding or
babysitting.

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

If you really want to work with,
help these kids you need more
education, an appropriate degree.
Your Mandarin would also open a lot
of doors.

Abby nods, but her body language indicates conversation closed. Sharon considers whether to continue but shrugs her shoulders - a temporary defeat.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I talked to our boss today.

ABBY

Really?

You know those great black-and-
white photos at the club? And there
are more at the center. Did you
know that they're all Red's?

Sharon shakes her head and takes a moment to process that -
an artistic side to the jock.

SHARON

La Ticia mentioned acupuncture to
him, and well, he's going to try
it.

ABBY

That's really surprising? When?

SHARON

Tomorrow morning.

ABBY

He sure looks like he needs it.
He's not an old man but he moves
like it. Although he plays with the
kids from the center every
afternoon, and Becky says they
really love it.

SHARON

I've seen it. He really seems to
enjoy it.

Abby feels she needs to add.

ABBY

But you know he's an addict. Pain
pills and maybe more. Are you sure
it's a good idea?

Sharon does, but not completely.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Red watches another DVD - this one of a regular season football game from the 1993 season.

ANNOUNCER THREE (V.O.)

Another tackle by O'Dell. That blitz move of his is now known as the Red Dog Blitz in the Redskins playbook. Other teams are copying it.

ANNOUNCER FOUR (V.O.)

It's unbelievable how he just leaps in there without any regard for his body. He fast and very tough. The quarterback for the Giants called him crazy.

Red smiles a thin smile and lies back on the couch. It's very hard to find a comfortable position.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharon opens the door for Red.

SHARON

Hello. Come in. Sorry for the informality but I can't afford a real office yet.

RED

No problem.

She leads him to the section behind the screen. The bed has sheets on it and a pillow. They sit on the chairs, facing each other. She's very professional. He's very nervous.

SHARON

So tell me when this back pain started and what you've done about it.

RED

I don't remember exactly, it seems like it's always been there. I had a steroid shot in my sophomore year of college.

SHARON
And you kept playing?

RED
Of course.

She's not buying that but presses on.

SHARON
So after that?

RED
For the back or other things?

SHARON
Let's stick with the back.

RED
Okay. Well a couple more steroid things during college, but they got less effective. Then my second year with the Redskins it really went out, and I had surgery on some discs.

SHARON
A discectomy?

RED
Yeah, I think that's what they called it. And it worked the first time.

SHARON
You did it more than once?

RED
Three times actually.

She's amazed, and it shows.

SHARON
Do all football players do this?

RED
No, not all, but many do. And for some it's knees or shoulders, neck.

SHARON
But your's were all back?

RED

Oh no, I've had both knees scoped,
several times, a partial tear of an
ACL in this one, shoulder
separation, broken collarbone, and
a shattered elbow.

He demonstrates the limited flexibility of his left elbow.
She's stunned. Almost speechless.

SHARON

How's your appetite?

RED

Okay.

SHARON

What did you eat for breakfast?

RED

Nothing today. Normally coffee and
maybe a bagel and cream cheese.

SHARON

Lunch and dinner?

RED

A burger, fries and if I'm home
some frozen dinner thing. If I'm
out, beer and bar-food kind of
stuff.

SHARON

How about bowel movements -
regular?

This makes him uncomfortable.

RED

Okay.

SHARON

Are they firm or soft?

RED

Mostly firm, I guess.

SHARON

Urination?

RED

Oh, the last few years my bladder
is on over-drive. Every hour or so
it gets urgent.

SHARON

Well, that's... Let's see if we can do some good for the back. You need to strip down to your underwear and lie down here. You can pull the sheet up to cover yourself.

She steps out behind the screen to give him some privacy.

He hesitates, surprisingly nervous as he then takes off his clothes, down to his boxer shorts. He grimaces as he sits on the bed, lies down on his back, and pulls the sheet up past his waist.

SHARON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

RED

Yes.

She comes around the screen, stands next to him and takes his hand, feeling his pulse.

SHARON

Try to relax. Your heart is racing.

It's an effort for him - his body and the situation work against it. She's very calm as she waits, and that gradually helps him relax some, but not completely.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Stick out your tongue for me.

That surprises him, but he complies. She looks carefully at his tongue. She maintains a very serene look on her face, no reaction, no judgement.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Acupuncture began thousands of years ago in China and is based on the theory that our life force, qi, flows through our body in channels or meridians. And sometimes the channels get blocked and that causes discomfort, pain, or other ailments. The needles work to unblock the meridians. Sometimes there is immediate relief but most often it takes three, four, or more sessions.

RED

I have to tell you that I'm not fond of needles.

She smiles.

SHARON

I've never met anyone who was, even me. But as the Buddha said, pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.

He's thinking about that as she pulls the sheet up from his feet to expose his legs. She takes a cotton ball, wets it with rubbing alcohol, then rubs it on parts of his ankles, legs, and hands to clean the skin. Then she takes a needle from a package and pauses.

SHARON (CONT'D)

This will pinch a little, and there will be a small reaction, like a tiny shock, when it hits the meridian.

He tenses, and she waits a moment for him to relax before she inserts the first needle in the back of his hand near his thumb. She has to manipulate it slightly before she feels his body react.

SHARON (CONT'D)

You okay?

He nods.

RED

Why there? The pain is in my back.

SHARON

The meridians run through the entire body and the blockage could be at any point and almost surely not in the back itself.

She proceeds to put eight more needles in his ankles, knees, hands and elbows.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Now, relax there for fifteen minutes, and I'll be back. Is the temperature comfortable for you?

RED

It's a little warm.

She goes into the other part of the room to adjust the air conditioning controls, and then turns up the volume on some new-age music with a slight oriental flavor. She sits quietly on the couch and writes some notes on her exam sheet.

Red closes his eyes and tries to relax. The needle going in wasn't too bad, but now there is increased pressure, discomfort in the area of each needle. He tries to control his breathing to relax, but he's not very good at it.

Sharon listens and worries that this is not going to be easy.

LATER. Red has almost managed to relax when Sharon returns and begins to remove the needles.

SHARON

Are you okay?

He nods.

After throwing the needles in the secure needle-disposal container, she takes his hands again and feels his pulse.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Good. I'd like to see you again in two days. Let the meridians begin to open up. So for the next twenty-four hours, no exercise, no alcohol, and no sex.

He responds sardonically.

RED

Oh? That's no problem.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, OFFICE - DAY

Red sits behind the desk and cautiously moves his back. Hopeful for some relief, he's disappointed, depressed. He glances up as La Ticia enters.

LA TICIA

Red.

RED

Tish.

LA TICIA

There was a reporter from the Post by here this morning looking for you.

He groans.

RED

Not Marcie Jones.

LA TICIA

In the flesh. She's doing a story on Willis Reynolds and wanted your comment.

RED

And you told her to bugger off, I hope.

LA TICIA

I know you don't care for her, but she's just doing her job.

Red knows this and actually agrees but doesn't want to admit it. She understands.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)

And she seemed genuinely concerned about how you were doing. Plus, you did throw yourself headfirst into that discussion the other day.

He has to acknowledge that.

RED

Tell her I have no comment, and no interview.

She shrugs her shoulders, not believing it for a moment.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A Nationals baseball game is on the television, but Red is asleep on his chair. Suddenly he wakes, as if from a bad dream, and he's stiff and sore. The TV remote has fallen on the floor, and he has a hard time bending over to get it. Frustrated, angry.

RED

Fuck a duck.

He stumbles up and to the kitchen.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Red reaches into the large waste container under the sink and pulls out several pill bottles. He wipes them off and then takes two pills.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Red wakes and carefully stretches, hoping to feel better. He's not sure. Maybe. But he looks like he slept better. He ignores the two pill bottles on the bedside table as he gets up and goes to the bathroom.

A moment later he is back and takes a pill from each bottle.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby swims her laps, while Coach Bob and Brad get set up for the morning practice. They both keep glancing over at her. Coach Bob hands Brad a stop watch.

COACH BOB

Can you time her for what would be
a 400 and an 800 if she goes that
far.

BRAD

Sure. She'll probably go far enough
for a 1,500.

Coach Bob agrees. Brad waits until Abby makes a turn, then he starts the watch.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Red walks slowly on the treadmill. It's still painful, no matter the speed. He has to pause and doesn't notice La Ticia watching him.

LA TICIA

You are one stubborn SOB. That's
probably the worst exercise for
your back and knees, but you insist
on doing it. And now you'll go to
the elliptical, which is better on
the knees but still impacts your
back and elbow.

RED

I've got to do something Tish.
You're as much a gym rat as I am,
maybe more.

LA TICIA

I ain't got a body that's been
repeatedly hit by a damn dump
truck.

She hesitates - she's been down this road with him before.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
Why won't you try swimming? It'll
take all that stress off your
joints. And it's great cardio.

He looks away, won't consider it.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

The students arrive for a Tai Chi class and take a spot on the floor. There are several more OLD PEOPLE there. Then Stevie enters with two FRIENDS, one male and one female.

STEVIE
Good morning teach. I brought two
friends, told them what a great
class this is.

SHARON
Well, thank you Stevie.

LATER. As Sharon walks around and checks on everyone's Warrior One pose, she comes to Constance, who looks wobbly. Then she notices that the older woman's pupils are constricted.

LATER. The class is over and the students are folding their mats.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Constance, can I have a moment?

Constance nods and follows Sharon to the front of the room. She's clearly nervous, resigned to the anticipated bad news.

CONSTANCE
I know what you're going to say.

SHARON
Really? What am I going to say?

CONSTANCE
You noticed that I'm on ... some
medication, and that I shouldn't be
doing this.

SHARON
Well, I did notice ... but that
doesn't mean that I don't want you
in class.

CONSTANCE

Really?

SHARON

Truly. Why did you think that?

CONSTANCE

I've been kicked out of two yoga classes at the home where we all live. They said that I was a bad example for the others.

Sharon is shocked, upset, for her.

SHARON

That's awful. To me, you need this more than anyone. What are you taking?

Constance pauses before answering quietly.

CONSTANCE

Oxycodone.

SHARON

How often?

CONSTANCE

You're not a narc or something like that, are you. Is there some ethical code for teachers that you would have to report me?

Sharon laughs.

SHARON

No. I just want to help. How many milligrams a day?

CONSTANCE

Forty.

SHARON

May I take your hand?

Constance nods, curious, and Sharon holds her hand, gauging her blood flow and pressure. The older woman now senses that Sharon knows a lot about this, and sees her a little differently.

SHARON (CONT'D)

And you're sure of the quality, your supplier?

CONSTANCE

Oh yes. Actually quite a few of us
at the retirement village take
them, same supplier.

It's really dreadful to get old,
Sharon.

She almost breaks down. Sharon puts her hand on Constance's
shoulder to comfort her.

INT. SPORTS BAR - DAY

Red and Curly eat lunch at the bar. Curly finishes his beer
and gets another one while Red nurses his.

RED

Do you ever think about whether or
not it was all worthwhile?

CURLY

Football?

RED

No, ballet. Yes football.

CURLY

Every day.

Red nods agreement.

CURLY (CONT'D)

But it's always the same answer -
hell yes.

Red agrees again, has something else on his mind.

RED

You ever consider trying something
different for the pains, you know,
something unusual, like maybe
acupuncture or something?

Curly looks at him like he's lost his mind.

CURLY

Fuck no. That's hippy-dippy new age
mumbo jumbo shit. And I hate
fucking needles.

He looks at Red.

CURLY (CONT'D)
You're not thinking of doing that
sissy fruit stuff, are you?

RED
Me? Hell no. We've got a new person
teaching at the club, and she does
it.

CURLY
They're not even real doctors, but
quacks like chiropractors. Remember
what happened to Fat Andy with a
chiropractor?

Red nods - Fat Andy was never the same.

CURLY (CONT'D)
Is she good looking?

Red smiles, shrugs his shoulders.

CURLY (CONT'D)
Well, maybe she could put a needle
in the right place for you to, you
know.

Despite Curly's attempt to be funny, thinking about his
experience with Marnie doesn't make Red happy.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby hugs Becky and whispers to her.

ABBY
You remember that you're your own
person and don't have to copy
anyone else.

Becky nods and smiles before she leaves with the other kids.

Coach Bob finishes up with his group and sees that Abby is
free. He approaches her.

COACH BOB
Hi. I'm Bob Hampton. You do a great
job with those kids.

She likes the compliment, but she's cautious.

ABBY
Thanks.

She goes into the little office and gets the chlorine testing equipment.

COACH BOB

I also notice that you've got a really strong freestyle stroke. Have you ever swum competitively?

ABBY

No.

She continues to work.

COACH BOB

Well, I was timing you the other day, and you could be one of the fastest in this area in the distance events - 400 and 800 meters.

She looks at the test tube for the results and hides any reaction.

COACH BOB (CONT'D)

Would you consider joining my club, training, and trying a meet? We have several long course meets left this summer.

She puts the equipment away and notes the results on the log sheet.

ABBY

I appreciate the offer, but I'm sure your club is expensive, and I can't afford it.

He's not one to give up easily.

COACH BOB

I understand, but I have a lot of little ones, just starting, and I'd be willing to trade - you work with them, and I'll waive the fee.

It's harder for her to say no, and she's not totally sure why she feels she has to.

ABBY

That's nice of you, but I've already got two jobs, and need the cash.

He doesn't quit, but he knows when to strategically retreat.

COACH BOB

Okay, well if you ever reconsider
let me know, I'm sure we could work
something out.

As he leaves the pool he passes Eunice who then begins to swim laps. Abby gets up into the lifeguard chair.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, LOUNGE - DAY

The next morning, Sharon, Abby and La Ticia talk quietly. When Red appears, their reactions indicate that their conversation has been about him.

LATER. Red sips his coffee between bites of the bagel and cream cheese that he bought from the deli down the street.

ABBY

Mr. O'Dell?

He looks up to see Abby shifting nervously on her feet. It takes him a moment as he tries to remember her name.

RED

Hello... Abby, and it's Red, Mr.
O'Dell was my father. Can I do
something for you?

He makes her nervous, and she regrets agreeing to do this.

ABBY

I ... I just wanted to let you know
that the pool is really not used
that much between 10 and 3, most
days, week days so...

He's curious and slightly amused by her nervousness.

RED

Oh, thanks, good to know. Is that
other group causing any problems?

ABBY

Oh no, they're very considerate of
our swimmers. And it's been
motivational for some, like your
mother.

RED

Yeah, she can be pretty
competitive.

ABBY

It's nice to see at her age.

She's grown less nervous, but now it gets awkward.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Well, gotta go.

RED

Okay, have a good day.

He smiles and looks around for La Ticia. He's pretty sure that she is behind this strange little encounter.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Red and Sharon sit on the chairs for their second session.

SHARON

Have you notice any differences
after the first treatment?

RED

Not really ... well maybe today a
little.

SHARON

And your intake of pills, what's
happening with that?

He knows he should be embarrassed by his addiction, but he's
not with her.

RED

I've been cutting down a little.
Not completely yet, but I'm working
on it.

SHARON

It's very hard. Some nausea,
diarrhea?

He nods, yes to both.

SHARON (CONT'D)

And early morning and late evening
are the hardest times.

RED

For sure. How did you know?

She hesitates, too personal.

SHARON

It's part of the natural cycle, the rhythm of our bodies, and those are times when we're the most needy, vulnerable, sensitive. Are you taking them just for the pain or for other needs? Like depression maybe?

RED

I'm depressed that my body is such a mess. And I have no control over it.

SHARON

You have more control than you think. For example, here's a list of foods that will help and some that will definitely not help.

He studies the list.

SHARON (CONT'D)

You'll see that what you've described as your normal meals are all on the not-helping side.

He's not sure that he's willing to go this far, to change his whole diet. She senses his reluctance.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Why don't you get ready.

She leaves while he begins to get undressed.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

The Tai Chi class has grown some more, still dominated by Older Students. But the number of young ones has increased, and they all seem to know one another, with Stevie as the focal point. Sharon notices that Marvin is slow to get up. She sits next to him, looks carefully. His face is flushed. She gently takes his hand like she did with Constance and with Red during his treatment. He gradually notices that she is there.

MARVIN

I'm a little lost.

SHARON

That's okay Marvin. You just relax while your heart settles down.

He does, and his color improves. She gently pushes his sleeve up and sees many needle marks. He notices and gives her a weak smile and a shrug.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SMALL CLASSROOM - DAY

Red has the kids running around the room on the mat. He has a pool noodle that he occasionally thrusts out to make the kids jump over. If they hit the noodle they have to sit in the center of the room.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby and Becky are in the pool and trying again to learn the breaststroke. It's just not working right, and Abby is frustrated. Brad watches from the deck, then comes over and sits on the edge of the pool next to them.

BRAD

Hi. I'm Brad, I'm assisting Coach
Bob this summer.

Abby nods. Becky beams - she likes meeting new people.

BECKY

Hi I'm Becky and this is Abby.

BRAD

Hello Becky and Abby. Looks like
you're working on breaststroke,
that's my favorite stroke.

BECKY

Mine too I think but...

BRAD

Would you mind if I gave you a
couple of things to try?

Becky is happy, while Abby is cautious.

BECKY

Yes, yes.

Brad slips into the pool next to them. Abby instinctively
steps away from him. Brad addresses Becky.

BRAD

You have very good arm motion. The
first thing I want you to work on
is when to breath.

(MORE)

BRAD (CONT'D)
You're doing it as you bring your arms in, but I want you to do it as your arms start to go out. So no legs right now, just stand here and do your arm motion and breathing. Okay?

Becky nods eagerly and tries it.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Okay, much better, but not so fast, let your arm movement work with your head.

He watches her try again. She gets it quickly.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Great. So just walk forward down the pool and back, just doing that.

Becky eagerly heads off down the pool. Brad turns to Abby and smiles. She's still cautious.

ABBY
Thanks. I've never really liked that stroke, but maybe I've been doing it wrong.

BRAD
Well your free is killing it. You should come train with us.

She nods once, not a commitment. Becky is back.

BECKY
That's so cool. Let's do the kick.

Brad laughs at her enthusiasm.

BRAD
We can add that later.

He hesitates and glances at Abby.

BRAD (CONT'D)
If it's okay with Abby. Keep working on the arms and breathing for today.

Becky's disappointment quickly disappears as she heads off down the pool again.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Red is on an elliptical machine. He's still in pain but slightly less. Enough, however, to want to take a pill. He takes one from his pocket, looks around to see if anyone is looking, then swallows it. He's about to take another one, but he stops, struggles, then puts it back in his pocket.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sharon and Abby are in the middle of dinner. Erich Korngold's violin concerto opus 35 comes from Sharon's i-phone on the counter.

SHARON

So he sounds like a nice guy, if
Becky likes him.

ABBY

Yeah, I guess so, but she likes
pretty much everyone.

The head coach asked me to join
their club, enter some meets. Said
I was fast.

Sharon's attention goes somewhere else. Not a good place.
Abby notices but doesn't pry. After a moment she continues.

ABBY (CONT'D)

And there's no fee if I teach for
them.

Sharon tries to decipher how her daughter feels about this.

SHARON

Do you want to do it?

ABBY

I might, but I don't have the time.

SHARON

You could cut back on your hours at
the pool or at the center.

ABBY

No I can't, we need the money.

Sharon knows that's the truth, but she doesn't like it. She gets up to take her plate to the sink.

SHARON

We could manage. I got two more in class today, and I'm sure I'll get some more TCM business soon.

Abby appreciates her mothers heartfelt but unrealistic optimism, then wants to change the subject.

ABBY

How's it going with Mr. O'Dell?

SHARON

It's hard to believe what he put his body through for that sport. We've only had two sessions so it's too early to know. But if I can just get him to the point where he's not taking so many pills, that would be a success. And he might tell some athlete friends.

Did you talk to him about swimming?

ABBY

Sort of, but not really. He kinda scares me.

Sharon laughs.

SHARON

Me too.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharon and Red talk before the next acupuncture treatment. His body language has changed, more relaxed, open.

SHARON

That sounds like real progress. Have you worked on your diet?

RED

No, not really, I haven't had much of an appetite, and I don't really cook. I eat out or have stuff delivered.

SHARON

There's this place I know, Celeste's catering, that provides healthy meals for a good price. I'm pretty sure that they deliver in this neighborhood. They're online.

RED

Thanks.

So how did you get involved with
all this stuff - Chinese medicine?
You don't look...

SHARON

What? Like I'm Chinese?

He thinks that she's teasing him, but he's not sure.

RED

Oh no, not that, it's just that
most doctors are so intense, up-
tight. And you're... not like that.

SHARON

Well, a number of years ago I found
myself in Northern India and tried
acupuncture, and it worked. I just
felt in-tune with it, I understood
it instinctually.

RED

So did you go to school or
something?

SHARON

Four years at the Beijing
University of Chinese Medicine.

RED

That must have been an experience.

SHARON

You have no idea. Twenty-two
thousand students, three thousand
or so international, from all over
the world.

RED

Did you have to learn Chinese?

SHARON

The courses were in English but we
learned a lot of Chinese.

RED

We?

SHARON

I was there with Abby, my daughter.

Red is momentarily confused, he hadn't put that together.

RED

So our Abby, the lifeguard, is your daughter?

SHARON

According to her birth certificate.

RED

I see you together sometimes, but I didn't put that... You don't ...

She doesn't let him hang for too long.

SHARON

Her father is Asian, and her appearance takes after him more than me.

Red wants to know more but feels a little uncomfortable, it's maybe too intrusive.

RED

So how is it going, the acupuncture thing?

SHARON

Slowly. Including you, I now have four patients. Unfortunately too many people still think of it as voodoo or quackery.

He looks a little guilty. He had certainly thought that also and maybe still does.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Today we'll of course still do the back but I thought we could begin on another area as well. What bothers you the most besides your back?

RED

Even though my back feels better it hasn't stopped the headaches. I buy Excedrin by the case.

SHARON

Okay, let's see if we can help that because you know that Excedrin, long-term use, has some problems, particularly with the liver.

He had heard that but has tried to ignore it. To change the subject, he tries humor

RED
So for the head I guess the needles
go in the feet.

She laughs.

SHARON
Actually yes, but also the neck and
scalp.

LATER. Red seems relaxed, maybe even asleep, as he lies on the bed with the needles.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

From behind the counter, Red watches as Coach Bob and Brad leave with the last of the morning swimmers.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby finishes a length of the pool and is making a turn when she notices Red standing on the pool deck. She stops, a little nervous.

ABBY
Good morning Mr. O'Dell

RED
Red.

ABBY
Red. I swim when no one is here to
guard. Is that okay?

RED
Oh, sure.

He stands, ill at ease.

ABBY
Can I help you with something?

RED
I never learned how.

ABBY
How to what?

RED

To swim.

Surprised, she quickly tries to be positive.

ABBY

Oh. Well that's cool, no problem.
Put on some trunks and we'll try
some basics.

It looks for a moment that he's stuck on making a decision.
Then he abruptly turns and goes out. She wonders if he'll be
back.

LATER. Red returns in a swim suit that looks thirty years old
in terms of style but brand new in terms of use. She tries to
cough to suppress a laugh. It doesn't quite work, but he
takes it well. He hasn't had a headache for almost twelve
hours.

RED

I know it's a little out of date.

ABBY

Not if you're on *That 70s Show*.

He laughs, which he needs.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Okay, hop in and lets see what you
can do.

He jumps into the pool but it's only 4 feet and the impact
hurts his knees. He winces and curses.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

RED

It's pretty shallow.

ABBY

Yeah, four feet, the whole pool,
great for laps but that's all.

So why don't you swim a lap and
let's see.

RED

But I can't swim.

ABBY

Right okay... pretend you are suddenly thrown into the middle of a lake or the ocean, what would you do to get to the shore, to survive?

Hesitantly, he thrusts his body forward into a very awkward and inefficient doggy-paddle. He doesn't make it half way to the other side before he has to stop. But he gamely continues and slowly makes his way down and back, walking a good portion of the way. It's painful for her to watch. He's gasping for breath. She tries to keep it light.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Wow, you weren't kidding.

Okay, first thing we need to work on is your arm motion and breathing. If that's not good then nothing works. Stand and move your arms and head like this. Taking a breath every time on the same side, whichever one is the most comfortable for you.

He gathers himself and tries, but his neck is too stiff to effectively breath from either side. He's getting frustrated as well as winded.

ABBY (CONT'D)

So that's an issue. Let's try something different. How buoyant are you?

RED

What do you mean?

ABBY

Can you float easily? Lie on your back and not immediately sink.

RED

I don't know. I've always avoided the water.

ABBY

Let's test it. Try to float on your back, arch it a little, let your body and legs loose, see if they float.

Red tries it and soon finds that he floats quite easily. He smiles, something works.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Great. You're very buoyant actually. So we'll try the backstroke, which is a favorite of mine. You're going to take your arms and pull them over your head like this.

She demonstrates.

ABBY (CONT'D)

First one and then the other. For breathing, do it between strokes, every time after the same arm, for a rhythm.

RED

What about the legs?

ABBY

Just arms and breathing for now, then we'll add the legs.

He begins the motion and quickly establishes a rhythm. That movement of his arms doesn't seem to hurt. And he likes having his face out of the water.

MONTAGE of shots of Red swimming with Abby's encouragement. Several times they laugh. He begins to kick, and after only a little instruction, gets the routine. His natural athleticism helps. The success is exhilarating for him.

They are so intent that they don't notice the arrival of Becky and the other kids. As soon as Red sees an audience, he freezes and quickly exits the pool. The kids watch him go and then jump in. Becky comes over to Abby, who is distracted by the arrival of Brad and his swimmers.

BECKY

Isn't that Mr. O'Dell?

ABBY

Yes, he's my boss. He's learning, just like you.

BECKY

He seems nice.

Abby isn't sure about that, but she certainly feels differently than she did an hour earlier.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

The Tai Chi class ends. The room is almost full now, still mostly older students and a few more friends of Stevie. Constance and Marvin talk privately, almost intimately. Sharon approaches them carefully, not intruding, before they notice her and welcome her.

CONSTANCE

Sharon, can we do something for you?

SHARON

Oh, you have, and I wanted to thank you.

MARVIN

For what?

SHARON

Bringing all your friends. It means a lot to have a good full class.

MARVIN

We told them all about it and how cool you are with our drug use.

SHARON

Really?

CONSTANCE

You can't imagine the stuff we deal with, you're young, healthy.

Sharon gets a funny, far-a-way look, not a happy place. They notice but don't comment.

MARVIN

Many of us are addicted but so what, we're old.

His attempt to lighten the mood almost works.

CONSTANCE

This class has almost given me the strength to stop, but you know, I don't really want to.

Marvin nods in agreement, and Sharon nods in acknowledgement.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM

Red sits behind the counter with Kim. Their dynamic is more relaxed. La Ticia approaches and hands him a bag from Old Navy.

RED
What's this?

LA TICIA
Open it later, you'll know what to do with it.

She's almost laughing as she leaves. He can't resist peeking into it. He's surprised, but not unpleasantly so.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby swims backstroke laps. Red enters wearing a pair of new, stylish but conservative swimming trunks. He waits for a minute watching Abby, then he gets in another lane and begins to practice his backstroke. She notices him but keeps swimming.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharon pulls out the last needle from Red's leg.

SHARON
Today I'm going to add something to see if we can push the back a little further. It's called cupping, and it stimulates blood flow through the muscles that can constrict and cause pain.

So you need to roll over on your side and put this pillow between your legs.

He does so.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Comfortable?

RED
Yes.

SHARON
I need to pull down your shorts a little to expose your buttock on the left side.
(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

That's where the cups go. They create a vacuum, so there is some pulling and discomfort. Are you okay with that?

He's not sure.

RED

Sure.

She pulls his shorts down on one side exposing his left butt cheek. Then she takes her cups and attaches them to the skin. The suction pulls the skin as a tight vacuum is created. She puts three cups on him.

SHARON

Are you okay?

He's grimacing, but it's not too bad.

RED

Okay.

LATER. She removes the cups, which leave bright red circles on his skin. He feels the effect and tries to look to see, but can't turn his torso enough.

SHARON

Would you like to see? They leave a mark that will be gone in a few hours.

She grabs a mirror and holds it up so he can see.

RED

Interesting. It looks like what I saw on those olympic swimmers.

SHARON

Yes, Michael Phelps is a big proponent of Traditional Chinese medicine.

RED

That should help the profession.

SHARON

You would think a celebrity endorsement would do a lot of good, but it hasn't very much, at least not yet.

He feels uneasy - is she also referring to him?

INT. SPORTS BAR - DAY

Red and Curly sit at their usual spot having lunch. Curly has a beer, but Red drinks a soda.

CURLY

Whatever you're doing dog, kept it
up, you look good. What's your
secret?

The conflict is evident on Red's face. He just can't admit to what he's doing.

RED

Just good living Curly.

CURLY

Yeah, that's a good one dog. Come
on, what's the real deal? New meds?

Red is silent, his conscience fights his embarrassment.

CURLY (CONT'D)

Oh, hell no, you're on medical
marijuana ain't you?

Red smiles coyly, allowing Curly to assume as much.

CURLY (CONT'D)

But dog, that shit ain't legal
here, not yet.

Red shrugs his shoulders, keeps his secret.

Curly notices a news flash on ESPN that is playing silently on the monitor above the bar.

CURLY (CONT'D)

Dog. Look. They cut Reynolds.

RED

No shit. Hey Rosie, can you turn
that up?

ROSIE, the bartender, grabs the remote and turns up the volume.

ESPN ANNOUNCER

... the announcement was unclear on the reasons for the release but sources are positive it was a direct result of the legal issues surrounding Reynolds and the public outcry against him, with one very vocal voice being ex-Redskin, all-star, Red O'Dell. The big issue now for the team is a large hole at the running back position just weeks before the start of the season.

The program cuts to a commercial and Rosie turns the volume off.

Curly looks at Red who continues to stare at the monitor.

CURLY

Jesus Red, did you do that?

Red can only shrug his shoulders.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Brad works with Becky on her breaststroke kicks, while Abby work with the other kids. They occasionally steal a glance at each other.

LATER. The kids have gone and Abby watches the other practice. She waits a moment and then approaches Coach Bob.

ABBY

Hi Coach.

COACH BOB

Hello Abby.

ABBY

I've been thinking about your offer, and I'd like to work something out.

COACH BOB

Great. What do you have in mind?

ABBY

Well, I get plenty of in-pool time as it is, and I normally push myself pretty good.

COACH BOB

I can see that.

ABBY

So what I really need is some help
with different things, technique,
like my turns, I know they suck.

He only nods.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I can rearrange my lunch hour to
spend an hour with you after my
kids leave. When would you need me
for your kids?

COACH BOB

Most of them come on Sunday. Does
that work for you?

She smiles with relief and nods; it's perfect - her one day
off.

COACH BOB (CONT'D)

Fantastic. Let's start tomorrow and
this Sunday.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SMALL CLASSROOM - DAY

La Ticia works with the kids and has them doing tumbling
exercises. Sharon peaks in the door and looks for Red. La
Ticia sees her and comes over.

LA TICIA

Red's not here. Had to go meet with
his accountant.

Sharon nods, not sure why she feels a little disappointed. La
Ticia notices her reaction.

SHARON

He's really good with these kids.

LA TICIA

Yeah. He's got a big soft spot for
them. Good thing for them.

SHARON

Doesn't their place have an area to
play, exercise?

LA TICIA

No, and more than that, the O'Dell
Foundation is one of their main
supporters, if not their biggest
one.

SHARON

Really? I didn't know there was an O'Dell foundation.

LA TICIA

Yeah, it owns this place. We're a non-profit operation... In more ways than one.

La Ticia is proud of what they do, but she's also worried about their future.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Coach Bob works with Abby and a couple of other swimmers on turns. She has some bad habits to break, but there is almost immediate improvement.

Coach Bob approaches Abby at the end of practice.

COACH BOB

You picked it up very quickly.

ABBY

It felt good, except that time I flipped into the wall.

COACH BOB

But you only did it once. I've had kids, people, do it time after time.

She laughs.

COACH BOB (CONT'D)

Have you ever done anything with starts? I know you can't in this pool. Our regular pool is almost ready, and we can work on that there.

ABBY

Where is your pool?

COACH BOB

The Brandywine Aquatic Center on 36th street. Not too far from here.

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

The evening crowd is again dominated by the old-timers and the NFL table is abuzz with the news about Reynolds.

Red seems to be reluctant to engage and certainly isn't eager to take any credit for the turn-of-events. But he has gotten drunk for the first time in weeks.

A group of four or five YOUNG PLAYERS, big like linemen, all very drunk, appear at the table and the conversation quiets. The leader of the group glares at Red.

YOUNG PLAYER 1

Well you happy old man? Your big mouth got us screwed royally.

Red would like to but he knows he can't ignore this.

RED

Not my decision. Just stated my opinion. Free country.

YOUNG PLAYER 2

You got some nerve talkin' about morality stuff when you're no better - you old pill-popper.

Red struggles to keep control; this could get ugly fast.

RED

Better watch your mouth. Your mommy'll wash it out with soap.

A buzz of tension floods through the group. Player 2 is about to pounce on Red.

MARCIE

Well, well, what do we have here. A meeting of the generations. Don't you boys have a curfew, game tomorrow?

Seemingly oblivious to the potential danger, the reporter inserts herself between the young and old players.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

And I have a good source who assures me that the last thing Chesterfield wanted to do was dump Reynolds, especially since Red wanted him to. But the kid is going to get arrested next week. His rookie debut is going to be on a prison team.

YOUNG PLAYER 1

And that makes you real happy don't it?

MARCIE

What will make me happy is if you
can manage to keep the Eagle
linebackers off your quarterback.

Young Player 1 looks like he is mad enough to hit her. Red
jumps up and stands between them.

YOUNG PLAYER 1

Get out of my face you old has-
been.

RED

Fuck you Martelli, you slow-footed
wop.

Red doesn't see the punch coming. It knocks him back into
Marcie and then onto the floor. That gets the others up from
the table. Curly sucker-punches Young Player 1 who drops to
his knees. No one pays any attention to the numerous
CUSTOMERS who record the incident on their cell phones.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

La Ticia comes up to the desk where Kim, Abby and Sharon are
talking.

LA TICIA

Has anyone seen Red?

KIM

Yeah about a hundred times on ESPN,
CNN, Fox...

La Ticia shakes her head.

Off to the side, Abby looks carefully at Sharon.

ABBY

Are you okay? You seem really
preoccupied this morning.

She nods, not sure she wants to talk about it, but they don't
have any secrets from each other.

SHARON

He's my patient, and I'm concerned
about his well being.

ABBY

About Red?

Sharon gives her a weak, maybe guilty smile. And their attention is then diverted as La Ticia joins them.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Red is sound asleep on his bed. Several pill bottles and an Excedrin bottle are on the bedside table. His nose is bandaged and there is a large bruise on his cheek.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

La Ticia looks up to see Red approach the counter. He still looks bad. She looks him up and down, not hiding her reaction.

LA TICIA

What am I gonna do with you?

RED

I don't need a lecture today.

LA TICIA

Well, somebody's gotta beat some sense into you. Grown man acting like some damn fool.

Sharon passes by on her way out and nods to them both. She reacts to how Red looks and almost stops, but she has an appointment. As she leaves, Red stares at her a little too long, and La Ticia notices.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)

How are your treatments going?

RED

Good. I was feeling much better. I thought I was twenty years younger - a damn fool.

He laughs at himself, which she appreciates.

Just then Constance comes to the counter and speaks to La Ticia.

CONSTANCE

Hi are you the manager?

LA TICIA

Yes, what can I do for you?

CONSTANCE

Well you have the most wonderful person, Sharon, teaching yoga and Tai Chi. We just love her and we're bringing all our friends. Some might want to do more here, do you have any brochures?

Red searches for some brochures and hands them to Constance.

RED

Thank you for your comments and referrals. We really appreciate it.

He watches Constance leave, then after a moment he cautiously asks La Ticia.

RED (CONT'D)

What do you know about her?

LA TICIA

That old woman? Nothing.

She's teasing him, and he's used to it. She doesn't answer quickly, but tries to get a sense of where he's coming from. He looks a little uneasy.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)

She was a friend of my little sister back in grade school through high school. They were both musicians - violin. Lots of talent. Evidently in their blood. She's a descendant of the composer Mendelssohn. And Kenya, my sister - our great, great grand-pappy was such a fiddler that he won his freedom from his master.

Anyway, they both went to this fancy music conservator where Sharon thrived but Kenya ... well, she didn't.

She goes off for a moment on an internal mental/emotional tangent - not a happy one. Then she forces herself back to the moment.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)

Anyway, Sharon was going great, getting to play with some good orchestras and then gets knocked up by this jock. And that was when Abby came along.

RED

So she was married?

LA TICIA

No, the asshole got cold feet and split before the baby was born. She had to do it all on her own and her career tanked. We lost touch with her after that, until she showed up a few months ago. And needed a job.

RED

She was in China for years.

LA TICIA

Evidently.

She senses a level of interest, a spark of something that she hasn't seen in him for a while. As is her style, she goes right for the heart of the matter.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)

Why don't you ask her out?

He answers quickly, flustered.

RED

I can't do that.

LA TICIA

Why not?

He has thought about this.

RED

Well, she works for me, not ethical.

LA TICIA

Actually, she's an independent contractor, gets paid a percent of the class fees.

RED

Yeah, right, but her daughter works for me.

LA TICIA

You're not asking her daughter out.

RED

And she my doctor, sort of, so not professional.

LA TICIA
It's all what you make of it.

She has fun teasing him, and he takes it well - they've known each other for many years.

RED
I wonder if she heard about the fight?

LA TICIA
I wouldn't be surprised, she doesn't seem to miss much in her quiet way.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Red swims his backstroke carefully, slowly, in some pain.

Abby watches from a bench along the side of the pool. Then she resumes drawing in her notebook.

She doesn't notice Brad until he sits down next to her.

BRAD
Hi.

ABBY
Hi.

BRAD
What are you drawing? I see you working on that a lot.

She's surprised.

ABBY
Oh, just this thing.

BRAD
Can I see? It looks cool.

She wants to, but at the same time she's reluctant. She hands it to him and looks away, but still watching his reaction. He really studies it.

BRAD (CONT'D)
This is incredible. She's such a bad kick-ass. What's her name?

ABBY
TaHsia - it means noble warrior in Mandarin.

He points to some subtle Mandarin symbols woven into the drawings.

BRAD

Is this Mandarin here? What's it mean?

ABBY

They're phrases that form the subtext for the story, which is about strength of character in the face of evil, darkness.

BRAD

Where did you learn that?

ABBY

Four years of school in China.

BRAD

That must have been so cool.

This is now headed too much into her personal space, but she's saved by the arrival of Coach Bob and several swimmers.

Red quickly exits the pool.

Moments later Becky bounces in with the other kids. She goes right up to Abby and Brad, takes both their hands, and announces.

BECKY

Today I want to learn butterfly.

They both laugh at her enthusiasm and determination.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ESPN is on the television but the sound is off. COMMENTATORS appear to discuss the various videos of the bar fight and the arrests that followed. Everyone looks bad except for Marcie. Several tweets are shown, most of them not favorable to Red.

Red watches, cringes, then switches the television to a baseball game. His cell phone pings, and he checks the many unopened text messages on his phone. He takes several pills and lies down on the couch.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharon opens the door to see Red. A brief moment of surprise. His face looks better but the remnants of the fight are clearly visible.

SHARON

Red? You're here? Are you okay?

RED

We had an appointment, or did I mess up the date, time?

SHARON

No, this is right, come in.

He studies her expression, tries to read her vibe, but he's not too good at that. Something is different, and he finally realizes what it probably is.

RED

So, I guess you saw all that stuff on TV about me.

SHARON

You were on television? When?

There's an awkward moment.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Okay, yes I watch ESPN, the news, and you've been hard to miss.

RED

I lost my cool.

SHARON

And paid the price I can see.

He's not sure if she's teasing him, but he goes with that and laughs.

RED

Yeah. But I want you to know that that's not the real me. Well it was me but not my normal thing... Not a barroom brawler.

She's glad but curious.

SHARON

Oh, why do you want me to know that?

RED

I don't know, I just do.

SHARON

Okay, well, then let's get started.
You seem to be in more pain today.

He nods as he walks to the treatment area.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sharon leads the yoga class in meditation.

LATER. Constance approaches Sharon as the others leave.

CONSTANCE

Sharon dear, do you have a moment
to talk?

SHARON

For you, always.

CONSTANCE

I wanted to know if it was normal
for these lessons to ... well to
increase one's sexual interests,
even old codgers like us.

Sharon is surprised but pleased that Constance feels
comfortable enough to ask about something so personal.

SHARON

Both Tai chi and yoga activate,
stimulate your body's life force,
and could certainly affect the
libido. Is that a problem?

CONSTANCE

Oh, at my age I thought those days
were long gone, but well, Marvin
and I have been sort of seeing each
other and the conversation has come
up.

Sharon smiles.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

I've felt some things that I
haven't in a long time, and I
believe that he has also, but ...

SHARON

What?

CONSTANCE

Well, it's easier for us isn't it?
We can just spread our legs. But
for the man he has to, you know,
get the equipment working properly.

Sharon is amused by the old woman's uncomplicated approach.

SHARON

I see. Have you tried and it didn't
work?

CONSTANCE

No, but I'm sure he wants to and is
afraid it won't. That would be
embarrassing for any man, even at
ninety.

SHARON

You know, I also do acupuncture,
and I believe that it can help that
problem.

CONSTANCE

Oh dear, he would never do that,
with those needles.

Sharon smiles at the disconnect between that and Marvin's
heroine habit.

INT. BRANDYWINE AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

The Brandywine pool is a dramatic contrast to the Athletic
Supporter pool. There is wonderful light from large windows
and a skylight ceiling. There is a diving pool next to the
eight-lane swimming pool. There are bleachers at one end of
the pool and above them hangs a banner for the SHARX SWIM
CLUB. At the other end are starting platforms, and that is
where Coach Bob works with Abby and several other SWIMMERS.
Brad demonstrates the proper stance and technique. Abby picks
it up very quickly.

LATER. Abby packs her bag. Brad appears beside her.

BRAD

Nice place huh. I know that they're
looking for a full time lifeguard
if you're interested in leaving the
jock strap.

She's confused.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Don't you know that's the nickname
for that place - the athletic
supporter aka the jock strap.

He laughs nervously, while she grins a little, not really
appreciative of the joke.

ABBY
Oh, well I like it there. It's
quiet.

BRAD
That's for sure, like a tomb.

She doesn't like negative people but decides to give him the
benefit of the doubt.

ABBY
Listen I gotta go, can't be late
for work.

BRAD
Back to the pool?

ABBY
No. I work evenings, nights, at the
Blair Center.

BRAD
Wow, you're ... busy.

ABBY
Mostly poor.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

She opens the door for Red.

RED
Hi.

SHARON
Hello.

RED
Thanks for squeezing me in. I
appreciate it.

SHARON
Well, I'm not exactly booked solid.

RED

No?

SHARON

No. It's been hard to establish a practice. I can't afford any advertising or anything, so it's just word of mouth, referrals.

He shifts a little. He hasn't been spreading the word, or even admitting that he's doing these treatments.

There's an awkward silence between them. A mutual attraction, which had been lurking beneath the surface, is coming up. But neither are comfortable with it.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Shall we get started?

RED

Sure.

He heads off to the treatment area and sits on the chair. He finally focuses on the music, violin concerto No. 3 in G major by Mozart. He listens and smiles.

RED (CONT'D)

This is nice.

SHARON

One of my favorites, Mozart's concerto number 3 in G major. Do you know it?

RED

Well, I'm not really a big classical guy, pretty much straight rock-n-roll.

She smiles, not surprised.

RED (CONT'D)

Do you play?

After he asks, he remembers that he knows she does.

SHARON

Oh, a long time ago, another life, a galaxy far away.

She tries to pull herself back from this bad place, change the subject.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I've been meaning to tell you that I really like your photographs at the club. Do you still do that?

RED

I still shoot some, but I haven't been able to stand and work in the darkroom for several years.

SHARON

Well, lets see if we can keep the back going in the right direction, and I thought I'd try something for your elbow. I see you flinching when you move it.

RED

I almost forget it sometimes. Amazing what you can get used to.

She nods - it sure is.

SHARON

You know the drill. Call when you're ready.

She goes out to the other part of the room and changes the music to something more generic, soothing, new-age.

RED (O.S.)

I liked the other better.

SHARON

Oh, all right.

She starts the Mozart again but at a lower volume.

LATER. He's dressed and they stand in the living room. He works up his courage.

RED

This is probably a violation of some code of acupuncture ethics or something, but I've got to ask anyway... would you like to have dinner with me this weekend?

She's surprised, but not completely. She's reluctant, but not completely. She's intrigued, but not completely.

SHARON

No professional prohibition, but...
I'm not really looking for any kind
of thing right now.

RED

I'm not sure what kind of thing you
mean, but whatever it is, I'm sure
I'm not looking for that either.
It's just been a long time since I
spent an evening with a smart,
attractive woman.

SHARON

Well, this woman isn't totally
immune to some flattery, so...
Sure, why not.

But can I pick the restaurant?

RED

Okay. Which one?

SHARON

It'll be a surprise.

He's not terribly fond of surprises, but he'll make an
exception for her.

RED

Deal.

INT. REGIONAL AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

It's a regional swim meet, and the pool is set up for long
course - 50 meter lengths.

Abby exits from the ladies locker room and is momentarily
overwhelmed by the size of the pool and the number of
SWIMMERS, COACHES and OFFICIALS. There must be hundreds of
swimmers in groups along the side and ends of the pool. She
looks around for Coach Bob and his SHARX SWIMMERS, and finds
them at one end beneath the SHARX banner.

In the spectator stands, Sharon, shifts on the hard bench,
apprehensive for her daughter. The SPECTATORS around her are
very loud as they cheer for their swimmers.

Abby stares down the length of the pool and smiles weakly as
Coach Bob comes over to her.

ABBY

That's a long way.

COACH BOB

It's twice as far as you're used to, but it means a lot fewer turns, which aren't your strength, yet. We have warm-ups in ten minutes, and you'll get a chance to see how it feels.

LATER. The SHARX swimmers, including Abby, warm-up in lanes three and four. Abby powers up and down the 50 meters. As she gets out, she turns to the coach.

ABBY

I love this, I really don't like turning.

He smiles.

LATER. The SWIM ANNOUNCER calls the next race.

SWIM ANNOUNCER

Event 16, women's 800 meter freestyle, heat one of three.

Abby gets on the starting block for lane 1. She's clearly nervous but keeps her focus on the water. The whistle from the REFEREE brings the swimmers to attention. The STARTER calls.

STARTER

Take your mark.

The swimmers get set, the starter horn sounds, and they're off. Abby is slower to react than the others because she's so nervous about not doing it correctly. Her adrenaline pushes her to try to quickly catch up, but when she does she settles into her normal rhythm.

Her first turn is awkward but she loves the ability to swim further without turning. The second turn is much better.

Sharon watches intently.

Coach Bob and Brad watch, pleased but apprehensive.

By the third turn, Abby is clearly ahead of the other women. And by the 400 meter mark, she is almost half a length ahead and pulling away.

Sharon overhears a SPECTATOR who looks at a printed heat-sheet.

SPECTATOR

Look at lane one, she's got no seed time. Where did she come from?

Coach Bob glances over to some of the other COACHES and allows himself a smile as he sees the looks on their faces. Here's a new swimmer, with no seed time, blowing away the heat. He knows there will be questions - this is a meet based on qualifying times, and Coach Bob had to pull some strings to get Abby into it.

As Abby approaches the wall on her final length, she is a full 50 meters ahead of the next woman and has almost lapped the last swimmer. And she doesn't look at all winded or tired.

Coach Bob and Brad compare the times on their stopwatches and break into big grins. Abby starts to get out, and Brad rushes over.

BRAD

No, you stay in the water until the race is over and the Ref blows his whistle, four quick chirps.

She nods, a little embarrassed.

As the other swimmers finally finish, and they all get out of the water after the Referee's whistle. Abby is too excited to stand still, vibrating with energy. She rushes over to Coach Bob and Brad.

ABBY

That was so much fun. I could have gone on forever.

COACH BOB

I know. And this time will qualify you for a fifteen hundred next month.

LATER. It's almost time for the 400 meter race. Coach Bob talks to Abby.

COACH BOB (CONT'D)

Remember, most people go out too fast, and they die. Just increase your normal pace at 200 meters, and you'll do great.

She smiles while bouncing on her feet. She loves the competition, the atmosphere.

The Referee and Starter begin the race and this time Abby has a better start. She goes out fast. Coach Bob looks concerned.

By 200 meters, Abby is ahead by half a pool-length and looks strong. Her turns have become much better.

At the end of the race, she is again almost a full pool-length ahead of the next swimmer and everyone on the pool deck and in the stands is aware of this new swimmer.

As Abby dries off, she awkwardly accepts the congratulations of the other swimmers on the Sharx team.

SWIM ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

We have a new meet and pool record
set in the women's 800 meters, with
a time of 8:55.19 by Abby Mendelson
of the SHARX. Congratulations.

Abby is stunned.

Coach Bob is not surprised, smug even.

Sharon is thrilled for her daughter, but her demonstration of it is much more subdued than that of other parents.

EXT. SMALL ASIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Red waits impatiently for Sharon. He's never been good at waiting for anyone. But his irritation immediately goes away when he see her walk up. She's wearing a summer dress that shows off her very fit body and beautiful figure, which is normally hidden under her workout clothes.

SHARON

So sorry I'm late. I hate being
late.

He smiles, he does also.

INT. SMALL ASIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The decor is simple but elegant in its simplicity. The art on the wall could have come from a kiosk in the mall but didn't. The lighting is subdued but not romantic. It's full but not crowded. Almost all the patrons are Asian.

As Sharon and Red enter, he does a poor job of hiding his surprise. This isn't what he would have chosen in a million years. Sharon notices and smiles as they reach the MAITRE DE.

MAITRE DE
(in Mandarin)
Welcome Miss Mendelson, a pleasure
to see you as always. I have your
table ready.

SHARON
(in Mandarin)
Thank you Mr. Chen. It is nice to
see you also. Is Mrs. Chen cooking
tonight?

MAITRE DE
(in Mandarin)
Yes, and Mi, our daughter, is
assisting her.

Sharon smiles and turns to Red who has been listening and is
now even more surprised.

RED
You speak Chinese?

She knows that she had mentioned it to him, but doesn't bring
that up.

SHARON
Yes, a little.

The Maitre De shows them to a table in a corner, quiet, but
the whole restaurant is quiet. He hands each of them a
printed piece of paper with the restaurant logo and a list of
a few dishes that comprise the menu for the evening. It's in
Mandarin with English translations.

MAITRE DE
(in Mandarin)
Enjoy your dinner.

She watches Red as he struggles with the menu - it's all
vegetarian, with many things he doesn't recognize. He finds
it more amusing than frustrating.

RED
You're going to have to help me
here. I don't know what any of this
is.

She smiles, pleased at his reaction. She knows it could have
gone a much different way.

SHARON

Mrs. Chen is famous for her
vegetarian dishes. And the choices
are different every day.

The WAITRESS, a young Chinese woman, appears at the table.

WAITRESS

(in Mandarin)

So nice to see you again.

SHARON

(in Mandarin)

Your smile makes my day happy.

(in English)

My friend does not speak Chinese,
so we should please speak English.

WAITRESS

Of course. Can I get you something
to drink?

Red is relieved that he can now understand.

SHARON

I'd like a glass of Glory Jade
Cabernet Sauvignon
(to Red)
That's wine from China.

RED

Well, I'm not too much of a wine
person.

(to the Waitress)

Do you have beer?

WAITRESS

Tsingtao is very good Chinese beer.

RED

Perfect. Thanks.

WAITRESS

Would you like to order also?

RED

I have no idea what any of this is.

SHARON

Do you mind if I order for you? Do
you like spicy things?

RED

A little bit, not too hot.

She nods as she looks at the choices and then orders two dishes in Mandarin. After the Waitress leaves, there is silence that begins to get awkward, especially for Red.

RED (CONT'D)

You know, I have to admit, that I was pretty skeptical when I first came to you for... for treatment. But I haven't felt this good in so many years. So good that I let myself get a little out of control a few weekends ago.

She smiles. She's certainly not unaware of the tendency of men to go overboard. But for some it's a real character flaw, and she hasn't made up her mind about Red.

RED (CONT'D)

In fact I'm down to only two pills a day.

That's good, but she doesn't want him to be satisfied.

SHARON

Well, I hope we can get you off them completely. What pain is holding you back?

RED

The knees mostly. And... Well, just getting old.

SHARON

Everyone wants a long life, but no one wants to be old. We should celebrate aging, not run from it or hide from it behind medication.

It's not a lecture, but Red feels a little chastised. She senses his discomfort and changes the subject.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Abby says that your swimming is coming along really well. Do you like it?

RED

Surprisingly. Although I'd like to be able to do something other than backstroke, you know, freestyle like Abby.

SHARON

That's the reason I was late actually. Abby was in a swim meet, her first.

RED

How did she do?

SHARON

I don't like to brag but... she set two pool and meet records in the 400 and 800 meter races.

RED

That's incredible, good for her. I tried freestyle, but my neck is too stiff for me to breath properly.

SHARON

We can work on that. And you know, yoga and tai chi would really help also.

Red's facial expression clearly communicates his feelings about that. He could never face his buddies if they knew he was doing yoga. She's seen it before and responds with a wry smile. Their first course arrives just in time to break up any lingering awkwardness.

Red examines his food. There is nothing there that he recognizes, but he gamely tries it. She almost laughs at his expressions of puzzlement, consideration, and then acceptance.

RED

This isn't half bad.

SHARON

Well I'll be sure to tell Mrs. Chen.

He gets it.

RED

Oh, no, I meant it's actually pretty good. I've just never tasted anything like it.

SHARON

I won't spoil it by telling you how good it is for you.

RED

Oh, no don't do that. I'd have to spit it out and embarrass myself.

LATER. They have finished eating, and the Waitress clears their plates.

SHARON

Tell your mother that was excellent.

WAITRESS

Thank you, she will be pleased.

RED

A family business?

SHARON

Three generations. The grandmother is the head chef. And another daughter does all the bookkeeping, business stuff. Although I know that she would really like to go to Paris and work in fashion.

RED

Family businesses can be great, but seldom easy. My dad started the club right before I was born. Then when I retired, we ran it together until he ... died.

Sharon just nods - clearly there was something that he edited out.

EXT. SMALL ASIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

They exit the restaurant. It's a nice summer night.

RED

My car is right over there.

They start walking. He's a little stiff but not much pain. None in the back, just his knees, which she notices.

SHARON

We can work on those knees next.

RED

I don't know how much you can do. There's not much cartilage left in either one.

They reach the car, and he opens the door for her.

INT. RED'S CAR - NIGHT

Red drives, and Sharon is comfortable with the silence, more than he is.

RED

I'm sure it's hard to understand,
why I ... why I persisted despite
all those injuries. Sometimes I
don't understand it myself.

SHARON

Actually, I do understand the
dedication - the obsession. I was
that way once with my violin. So
intense that I compressed nerves in
my neck and back and could barely
hold it.

She pauses, not sure about this - maybe too much personal
information. She's surprised that she even brought it up.

RED

Is that why you stopped?

SHARON

Long story. Stories. Let's just say
that life got in the way, or
better, as Confucius says, we must
always change to be constant in
happiness or wisdom.

He wrestles with that.

RED

I'd love to hear you play sometime.

SHARON

Oh, I haven't held a violin in
years. Had to sell mine to...

Not a pleasant memory for her. He wisely doesn't pursue it.

EXT. SHARON'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Red and Sharon stand in front of her apartment building. He
has no idea what to do, so he stands on shifting feet and
smiles carefully. She's equally unsure.

SHARON

I had a nice time. Thank you.

She keeps her distance but gives him a European style kiss on both cheeks, then turns and lets herself into the building. He watches the door for a moment after she's gone, then turns and leaves. This is the best evening he's had in a long time.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sharon sits up in bed reading. The room has very few personal touches or items except for photos of a young Abby on the dresser. Abby pokes her head in the door.

ABBY

Hi.

SHARON

Qianjin. That was a long practice.

ABBY

I stayed and did some dry land with Brad and the older swimmers.

SHARON

Who's Brad?

ABBY

He's an assistant coach but also swims for Pitt.

Sharon looks closely at her daughter. There is a tone to her voice that she hasn't heard in a while. Abby notices the inspection and gets uncomfortable.

ABBY (CONT'D)

How was your date last night?

SHARON

Oh, it was okay. Nothing special really.

Now it's Abby's turn to try to decipher a tone of voice, a subtext. And it's Sharon's turn to feel a little unsure of herself.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Abby works with Becky on a butterfly motion. The little girl is a natural athlete. The other kids need Abby's help also, and she is torn. They don't notice Brad as he sits down on the side of the pool.

BRAD

Hi Becky, Abby, can I help?

Becky squeals with delight at seeing Brad.

BECKY

Oh yes Brad, please, Abby you can help Simon and the others, Brad is here.

ABBY

What are you doing here?

BRAD

I was in the neighborhood.

ABBY

In your swim trunks?

BRAD

They're always on, under my clothes, sometimes I don't wear -

She cuts him off.

ABBY

Too much information.

Then she goes over to work with SIMON and the other kids. Brad turns to Becky.

BRAD

Okay let's see your butterfly, down and back.

Brad watches Becky and doesn't indicate that he sees Abby staring at him.

LATER. The kids have gone, and Abby and Brad are left alone.

ABBY

I thought you considered this place depressing.

BRAD

Well, it does have it's charms.

He smiles at her, and she rolls her eyes as she tries to hide a smile. He changes the subject.

BRAD (CONT'D)

So, are you going back to school this fall?

ABBY
No, I'm not in school.

BRAD
Really?

He's unsure how to proceed - what to ask, how to ask.

ABBY
I did two years of college in
China, but I haven't done anything,
applied anywhere here.

BRAD
Then come to Pitt. It's a great
school, excellent pool and team,
coach. And it's close to home, but
not too close, if you know what I
mean.

She nods, noncommittal. She mostly wants to go, but they
can't afford it.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharon and Red sit and talk before a treatment starts. They
both appear to be comfortable with each other. There is some
casual flirting going on.

INT. SMALL ASIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Red and Sharon eat dinner. They're relaxed and having a good
time. Red tries a new dish, and his face puckers up in
disgust. He really wants to spit it out, but knows he
shouldn't. She struggles to keep from laughing as she hands
him the paper napkin from under her wine glass.

SHARON
Here spit it out in this.

RED
Oh, thank you, Dee would've never
done that.

She's intrigued by the opening but hesitant.

SHARON
Dee?

He hadn't realized that he said her name. But now that it's
out...

RED

My ex-wife. She had country club manners and was vicious about enforcing them. Tish called her the witch.

That's enough for her.

SHARON

So you and La Ticia go way back?

RED

My dad hired her when she was in her twenties. Her older brother was a teammate, undersized line backer. Big heart but bad friends. He was killed in a drive-by about ten years ago.

She puts her hand on his arm.

SHARON

I'm so sorry.

Careful smile - bad memory, but he likes her touch.

INT. BRANDYWINE AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

At the beginning of a practice, Coach Bob approaches Abby, who talks to Brad.

COACH BOB

Abby, I'd like to have you race in the 200 free this weekend.

ABBY

Isn't that like a sprint?

COACH BOB

Yes, but you've got the speed and the stamina to sustain it. Let's do a test so you can see. Brad, please ask Mary and Alice to come over here.

Brad collects MARY, a high school senior swimmer, and ALICE, a college sophomore. Coach Bob addresses them.

COACH BOB (CONT'D)

I'd like the three of you to race a 200. All-out, like a meet.

MARY
Sure coach. When?

COACH BOB
Right now.

ALICE
Cool.

He clears the swimmers out of three lanes and then starts the race. Alice and Mary get a much better start than Abby, but she quickly catches up. They stay together for the first 100, and then Abby starts to ease ahead. Mary and Alice speed up and Abby reacts with her own burst of speed. Mary's and Alice's bursts soon peter out, but Abby continues her pace to the end. She wins by five seconds. Coach Bob looks at his watch and can barely control his excitement. Brad has also kept time.

BRAD
Wow. That's NCAA championship kinda time.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sharon teaches the tai chi class. Constance, Marvin and Stevie are there. But there is also a new student in the back - Red.

LATER. Class is over, and Constance has stayed to talk to Sharon.

SHARON
Hi Constance, you looked good today. But something looked a little off with Marvin. Is he okay?

CONSTANCE
Damn fool is off his meds, or some of them anyway.

SHARON
Why?

CONSTANCE
Says they make him impotent and he wants to... you know.

She smiles, she does.

SHARON
Did he talk to his doctor?

CONSTANCE

He says he did, but I don't know
whether to believe him or not, damn
fool is horny like a teenager.

She's not really upset about that, but she is worried.

SHARON

Well, let's keep an eye on him.

Has it worked yet?

CONSTANCE

No, but we're getting closer. I
think I even had a little orgasm
the other night. Can you believe
that, at my age.

She's still shaking her head and laughing as she leaves.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, LOUNGE - DAY

Sharon drinks a energy concoction she brought from home while
she reads a Chinese textbook on acupuncture. La Ticia joins
her and notices the book.

LA TICIA

Lordy, can you read that?

SHARON

Most of it, not all the technical
terms, but I look those up.

LA TICIA

Not exactly light reading.

SHARON

No, I'm trying to learn the
meridian points for impotence.

La Ticia is immediately alert, cautious, curious.

LA TICIA

Really? A client with a problem?

SHARON

Yes, an old man in my tai chi
class, he's gone off his heart
medication because it has that side
effect. But I'm worried that he
really needs the medication for
it's primary function.

La Tisha relaxes.

LA TICIA

Well, acupuncture has really made a difference with Red, he's almost back to his old annoying self.

SHARON

He even came to the tai chi class today.

LA TICIA

Really? And swimming. That man is no end of surprises.

And you two are going out I understand.

Sharon smiles cautiously.

SHARON

A few times. Nothing too serious.

LA TICIA

I've known him for many years, and when it comes to women, he's always serious.

Sharon is surprised, maybe a little concerned.

SHARON

I understand he's been married... several times?

LA TICIA

Yeah, three. High school sweetheart and cheerleader. Then the professional cheerleader, not so sweet. And finally the professional ball-buster. Not a good progression.

SHARON

We all make some bad choices.

LA TICIA

Amen to that.

I don't know where this is going with you two, but if it does get serious, you might need that information for more than one man. If you know what I mean.

It takes Sharon a moment to realize what La Ticia refers to, and then she's almost embarrassed.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Red swims his backstroke laps. Then he tries a few freestyle strokes, and his neck movement is much better. He can almost get the breathing right. Abby watches him working on it and admires his persistence.

LATER. Red dries off near the lifeguard stand where Abby sits.

RED

Kind of quiet here with that group gone.

ABBY

Yeah, I don't mind. But they were cool. I'm actually practicing with them after work.

RED

Oh, yeah, your mother told me that you won some races, set records, congratulations.

She's uneasy with the attention, compounded by what she perceives as a developing relationship between Red and her mother.

EXT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sharon and Red leave, they're in good spirits. He takes her hand as they walk to his car.

EXT. SHARON'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

They pause, then kiss - a serious kiss. Both want more, but she breaks it off and tells him good-night. He watches her go inside; he's frustrated but happy.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tai chi class. Red is there, looking more flexible. Constance comes in late, looking sad and slowly joins the group. Sharon looks at her carefully and doesn't want to face what she fears has happened.

LATER. As the class disperses, Constance lingers, and Sharon takes her arm.

SHARON
What's happened? Is it Marvin?

CONSTANCE
He's gone dear. Heart attack last night. Never made it to the hospital.

SHARON
Oh Constance, I'm so, so sorry.

Constance shrugs with the fatalism of the elderly.

CONSTANCE
We were in my bed, and had just done it properly for the first time. He had this incredible orgasm. Such a wonderful smile. Then a massive heart attack. Life's full of curve balls and shit like that.

Sharon can only nod in agreement.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sharon and Red eat at the kitchen table. There are carry-out cartons of food from the Asian Restaurant.

SHARON
I know I said I would cook, but I didn't have time with...

RED
It's perfect.

I'm so sorry about Marvin.

Sharon fights back tears.

SHARON
I didn't know him that well, but I admired his determination. And he made Constance happy.

He takes her hand, and they sit quietly.

RED
Where's Abby?

SHARON
Working - she's the over-night caregiver at the Blair Center.

He thinks he knew that, but he's not sure.

SHARON (CONT'D)
You never had any kids?

That's something that he can remember.

RED
No. Almost did with Sandy, my first wife. After we divorced, I could never decide if that was good or not. I know it's hard raising a kid as a single parent.

She knows all about that.

SHARON
When Abby was seven, I was so desperate that I married this doctor, George, mostly for the security, to give her a nice home, good schools.

RED
But no kids?

SHARON
No. No, he wanted them, but it just never worked out.

Despite the depressing nature of the conversation, she's very happy that she feels comfortable enough to talk about it.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Red and Sharon sit on the couch. Tchaikovsky's violin concerto in D major plays. There's an awkward moment before they simultaneously turn to each other and kiss. It's passionate and hungry. Clothes are going to get torn off any moment now. But then suddenly Red pulls back. And then he pulls her into an embrace so she can't see the frustration, the turmoil on his face.

LATER. Red is gone, and Sharon, now in a nightgown, sits lotus-style on the couch with the Chinese textbook open on her lap. She makes some notes on a notepad.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Red lies in bed, unable to sleep, sexually frustrated, angry. The television is tuned to a soft-porn movie on HBO.

He reaches down to his testicles and tries to stimulate an erection but nothing happens.

RED

Damn!

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

During the tai chi class, Sharon looks around for Red, but he's not there.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Red swims, trying to work out his frustrations. Abby wonders what's going on.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, OFFICE - NIGHT

Red sits and stares out the window. A dark cloud hovers over him.

La Ticia appears in the doorway to say good night. When she notices his mood, she sits and waits quietly.

RED

Tish

LA TICIA

Red

More silence, not uncomfortable between old friends.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)

She's not like the others.

RED

I know.

LA TICIA

You can talk to her.

RED

Yeah.

LA TICIA

It's not the most important part of a relationship.

RED

I guess.

LA TICIA
Trust me on this one.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Red watches a Nationals baseball game on MLB network. He eats dinner from take-out containers. He's lost in thought.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sharon listens to Samuel Barber's opus 14. She's so intently into it that she doesn't realize when she begins to hold an air-violin and play along.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharon greets Red at the door. They are both a little cautious with each other. He goes right to the treatment area and sits. She watches him and then follows.

SHARON
How are you feeling today?

Red pauses, considers.

RED
Confused.

SHARON
I'm not sure I can treat that.

He smiles - she's the cause of it. She nods slightly - she knows it.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Why don't you get ready?

LATER. She puts some needles in different places than usual.

RED
That's the first time there.

SHARON
I'm trying something new.

RED
So I'm your guinea pig?

An enigmatic little smile from her.

SHARON
Something like that.

LATER. Red opens his eyes, and slowly he realizes that something is different. He lifts his head and looks at his crotch. Sure enough there is the beginning of an erection. Then he hears Sharon move in the other part of the room and he shifts his body, then the sheet, trying to hide it.

Sharon comes around the screen and tries not to look at his crotch, but the protrusion is hard to miss. She's almost successful in keeping the smile from her face.

As she pulls the needles out, the closeness, the contact further stimulates him. He doesn't know what to do. Should he make a joke about it? Pretend it's not happening? She helps by ignoring it.

SHARON (CONT'D)
I think we'll forgo cupping today.
You can get dressed.

She leaves, and he sits up and tries to think of something else to get the erection to go away. It's not working very well.

LATER. Red emerges from behind the screen, dressed and no sign of an erection. Sharon sits on the couch making some notes on her research.

RED
Are we still on for a movie
tomorrow night?

SHARON
Yes, which one?

RED
I'm open for suggestions.

SHARON
I'd really love to see the new
Marvel movie.

He looks surprised. He had been expecting to have to sit through a chick-flick

SHARON (CONT'D)
What? You didn't think I'd like
some action?

He doesn't get the double entendre.

RED
Oh, no, I love Marvel films.

INT. BRANDYWINE AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

Practice has just started. Coach Bob comes up to Abby.

COACH BOB
I want you to go easy today, taper
off for the meet tomorrow.

She nods in agreement, turns and almost bumps into Brad, who
has been lurking behind her.

ABBY
Sorry.

BRAD
Hey, after practice I'm meeting
some friends for a beer, want to
join us?

She does, and she doesn't, but she can't.

ABBY
Sorry but I've got to work.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Red and Sharon watch the movie, holding hands.

INT. BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Abby sits on the bed next to Becky. The other GIRLS are
crowded on the bed also. Abby reads a Dr. Seuss book - The
Cat in the Hat.

INT. OUTDOOR CAFE - NIGHT

Red and Sharon talk intimately, still holding hands.

INT. BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Abby watches Becky sleep and smiles.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sharon and Red come in and immediately embrace and kiss.

INT. BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, LOBBY - NIGHT

Abby returns to the lobby to find Brad standing there looking at her work.

ABBY
How'd you get in?

BRAD
Some guy was going out.

ABBY
Oh, Tiny, he's the maintenance man.
I didn't know he was still here.

BRAD
Not anymore.

ABBY
What are you doing here? What
happened to your friends and the
bar?

BRAD
I realized that I had other more
important things to do.

ABBY
Like what?

BRAD
Seeing where you work. Where Becky
lives. I didn't know if you had
time for dinner, so I brought some
food.

He hold up a paper bag from Panera.

BRAD (CONT'D)
I see you eating it sometimes so I
thought you liked it.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sharon and Red are in heavy make-out mode on the couch.
Clothes are still on but hands are all over each other, in
some private places.

INT. BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, LOBBY

Brad sits across the desk from Abby and they finish eating. There is that awkward, sexual tension in the air and both can feel it. The sound of a child, maybe Becky, calling/crying comes down the hall. Abby gets up.

ABBY

I've got to check on that. Stay
here, if Becky sees you she'll
never get to sleep.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sharon gets up and pulls Red up and off toward her bedroom.

INT. BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Abby tucks Becky in and then leaves.

INT. BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Abby comes out of the dorm room and runs into Brad. They don't break off the contact. After a moment of staring into each other's eyes, they kiss, first tentatively, then more aggressively.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sharon and Red are naked and having sex. Everything seems to be working just fine.

INT. BLAIR CENTER FOR ORPHANS, HALLWAY - NIGHT

The kissing has progressed into some groping by Brad. Abby is okay with it on her breasts, but when his hands drop lower, she stops him. He tries to persist, and she pulls out of their embrace.

ABBY

Too much, too fast. You should go
now.

BRAD

I'd like to take you out, is there
a night that you don't work?

ABBY

Sunday.

BRAD
Can I see you on Sunday?

She nods, pleased but still cautious.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Red is asleep as Sharon watches him. She's very pleased but still cautious.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Sharon is dressed. She writes a note and leaves it on the table.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Red slowly wakes, feeling fantastic, reaches over for Sharon, but she's gone. He sits up and looks around.

RED
Sharon?

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Red, now dressed, enters, and after a quick look around, sees the note.

SHARON (V.O.)
Good morning. I had to leave early for Abby's swim meet. I doubt I have much that you would like for breakfast, and no coffee. Sorry. It was a wonderful night.

He's disappointed but still happy. It had been a wonderful night.

INT. REGIONAL AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

Sharon got there late, so she has to stand at the back of the viewing area.

SWIM ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Event 10, women's 200 meter freestyle, heat one of six.

At the whistle, Abby steps up on the starting block. The Starter starts the race, and Abby's start is almost as good as the other women.

The race is four lengths of the 50 meter pool. After two lengths, Abby, in lane one, is slightly behind the fastest girl, in lane five. Abby kicks her stroke into a faster gear and soon passes the other swimmer. At the finish, Abby is three seconds ahead. She's not thrilled with her effort, she knows she could have done better. But Coach Bob looks up from his stopwatch and is all smiles.

INT. AQUATIC CENTER, LOBBY - DAY

Abby, now dressed, meets her mother in the lobby. Sharon is so proud of her and pulls her into a big hug. Abby is embarrassed but pleased.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Red swims laps in the pool. He alternates between backstroke and freestyle.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sharon stirs vegetables in the wok. Abby enters, she's dressed a little nicer than normal.

ABBY

I'll see you later.

SHARON

Where are you going? Dinner's almost ready.

ABBY

I'm meeting Brad and some people, and I'm not really hungry. That was a big late lunch.

Sharon tries to hide her surprise, curiosity.

SHARON

Well, okay, have fun.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An NFL pre-season game is on between the Cleveland Browns and the Seattle Seahawks.

The sound is turned way down and Red barely pays attention to it as he finishes his dinner from Celeste Catering. He picks up his phone, thinks of calling Sharon but decides not to. His happiness conflicts with his concern that he has made so many mistakes with the women in his past.

INT. TRENDY BAR - NIGHT

Abby is with Brad and a group of his FRIENDS at the end of the bar. Some sit on bar stools, others stand. Most of them, including Brad, are drinking beer even though many look too young. It's a group that's known each other for years from prep-schools and country clubs.

Abby drinks a soda. Brad is totally fixated on her, and she's not rebuffing his attention.

One woman, STACEY, 20, seems upset that Brad is paying so much attention to Abby. TED, 21, a football-type jock, whispers to Stacey.

TED

Looks like Brad's got a new girl,
so you finally gonna give me some
lovin'?

STACEY

Fuck off Ted. I'll get him back.

TED

Stacey, Stacey, as charming as
ever. Tell you what, I'll divert
little missy, and you do your thing
with Brad.

Not waiting for a response, Ted moves over and stands next to Abby, his body pressed up against her. She shifts for some space, but there's no where to move. Ted whispers something in her ear that makes her upset.

ABBY

What the fuck? Get out of my face.

Ted is good looking but not very bright and certainly not used to women rebuffing him. He grabs Abby's arm.

TED

Come on baby, you don't need this
loser.

Without warning, Abby spins and has Ted's arm behind his back in a very painful position. She applies more pressure as she whispers something in his ear, then pushes him away.

As everyone laughs at him, Ted goes crazy. He charges Abby. She moves, and with almost no effort, flips him on his back. Her foot rests on his sternum. She's clearly in control. Everyone backs up. Brad goes to take her arm, and she almost assaults him before she realized who it is. He quickly leads her away.

EXT. TRENDY BAR - NIGHT

As Brad and Abby exit, she starts to walk away.

BRAD

Abby, please, don't let that
butthead get to you. He's not worth
it.

ABBY

I shouldn't have done that, I'm
sorry.

BRAD

It was amazing, where did you learn
to do that?

ABBY

Four intense years of tai chi.

Listen, this was a bad idea, I
shouldn't have come.

BRAD

I'm glad you did, and I'd like to
start over if we can. How about a
coffee? A nice quiet Starbucks.

She smiles, careful but sincere.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sharon is about to start her tai chi class. Constance is there with ANDY, 91. Red slips in just in time. Sharon gives him a warm, careful smile. Constance notices, feels the vibes, and smiles.

LATER. After class, Constance introduces Sharon to Andy.

SHARON

Nice to meet you Andy, hope you
enjoyed the class.

ANDY

I hope it can do for me what it did
for Marvin, rest his soul.

Constance gives Sharon an odd smile and a shrug - she can't help it if all the men want her now. Sharon picks up on this and marvels at her.

Red has been hanging out behind Constance and Andy, and he steps up to Sharon after they leave.

RED

Hi.

SHARON

Hi.

RED

I was going to call you yesterday
but I thought you'd be busy with...

SHARON

Yes, with Abby's meet, we were
pretty busy, but I would have made
time to talk to you.

He smiles, he believes her.

SHARON (CONT'D)

My yoga class is coming up. Can we
talk later?

RED

Sure, I'll probably be down in the
pool. Oh, how did Abby do?

SHARON

Another record. I ...

She's not able to get into all that right now because other
YOGA STUDENTS are arriving for class.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Red enters the pool area, ready to swim. He pauses when he sees Brad with Abby, talking intently. He almost turns and leaves but sucks it up - it's his club.

He jumps in and starts to swim. Brad and Abby watch.

BRAD

Is that Red O'Dell?

ABBY

Yeah, he owns the club.

BRAD

He was my dad's favorite Redskin.

So, are you going to apply?

ABBY

I don't know, it's late, school's about to start.

BRAD

I talked to Coach Middens, and he has a full scholarship that he would give you.

She's happy that he took the initiative but still hesitant to commit - to anything.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, LOUNGE - DAY

Sharon sits lost in her thoughts, some good, some bad. Her quiet structured life is in disarray - she's allowing someone in, being vulnerable. She doesn't notice Red until he's right in front of her. He's in his wet swim suit and t-shirt.

RED

Hi.

SHARON

Good swim?

He nods, then is unsure what to do next.

RED

I've got to go shower and change, would you like to come up, and we can talk?

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sharon looks around as the sound of the SHOWER comes from the bathroom. She examines his photos and pauses at the photo of Paddy to check Red's resemblance to his father. She doesn't notice that the sound of the shower has stopped. Then she moves to the photos of Red and Sandy. Way over in the corner is the other wedding photo, this one of Red and Chloe. She's looking at that as Red enters.

RED

Wife number two, Chloe.

She's curious but not one to pry, to push.

He walks over and stands in front of the pictures of Sandy.

RED (CONT'D)
That's Sandy, first wife.

He goes quiet in the past. She doesn't intrude. Then he's back.

RED (CONT'D)
Would you like something to drink?
I've got soda, sweet tea, beer, no wine.

SHARON
Some tea would be great, thanks.

She looks at the Sandy photos while he gets drinks.

SHARON (CONT'D)
She's beautiful. What...

She catches herself, she wants to know but is still unsure of her position, their relationship.

Red hands her a glass of tea, and motions to the couch where they sit.

RED
We got married the summer after our sophomore year of college. And then I had a great couple of seasons, and the pro scouts started pushing me up their draft boards. The media latched on and...

Sandy was quiet, never comfortable in that role. She wanted to be a teacher, have a family. Oh, I wanted that too, a family, but I thought - why can't I have the other also?

My rookie contract was more money than my old man made in his entire career. The sky was the limit.

His expression is full of turmoil, pain, and she grabs his arm, squeezes. He gives her a wan smile.

RED (CONT'D)

The first few years were hard - so much of our lives were lived in different worlds, and we grew further and further apart.

Then twelfth game of my second season, I blitzed, sacked the QB but got crushed in a pile up. My back went out, and I had disc surgery. I was a terrible patient. I drove her crazy. I realized later that I was scared.

SHARON

Of what?

RED

Of it being over - not the marriage really but my career. I was hooked on the money, the fame, the excitement.

He looks over in the direction of the wedding photo with Chloe.

Chloe was one of the teams' cheerleaders, and I convinced myself that she was different. That we were friends, she understood me, my life.

But Sandy didn't see it that way, and ... well Chloe, of course, wasn't that different. She wanted me as a ticket to the good life. But I was too stupid, too into myself to see any of this.

I'm sure you can imagine the rest. I slept with Chloe, Sandy found out and left me.

They sit in silence for a little while. Red lost in the past. Sharon struggles with her past and the present, decides that it's time to share.

SHARON

My roommate at the music conservatory where I went to college was a flutist from California.

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

My junior summer I stayed in Santa Monica with her and met her brother who was an olympic swimmer at USC. We had a torrid affair, and I got pregnant - I was very naive and inexperienced. The moment he found out I was pregnant, he, he disappeared.

RED

What a shit.

SHARON

Yeah. My parents were still alive then, and they urged me to get an abortion, not have it derail my education, my career. But I couldn't do it. And I thank God I didn't. I don't know what I would have done without Abby.

He hugs her, and she responds, mutual needs and pain. This might potentially lead to bed and sex, but that doesn't feel right to either of them. They're mature enough, battle scared enough, to know the difference.

SHARON (CONT'D)

So what happened with Chloe?

RED

We got married, had wild sex, wilder parties. I almost got cut that next summer, and it brought me back to reality, and the reality was that she was a coke-head.

Sharon has a physical reaction, which causes him to pause.

RED (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

She nods, but her body shakes. He holds her until she settles down.

SHARON

Thanks, I'm okay. So Chloe...

He's not sure about what's going on with her, but he continues.

RED

Well, one day, I came home and she's in a coma, over-dosed, and never comes out.

SHARON
Oh, I'm so sorry.

They embrace again, and this time it's likely going toward sex as an emotional release, but there's a KNOCK at his door.

LA TICIA (O.S.)
Red are you there?

He reluctantly gets up and opens the door for La Ticia, who looks concerned.

RED
Tish, what's up?

LA TICIA
Sorry to bother you, but Marcie Jones is downstairs with a camera crew.

She looks past Red and into the living room.

Hi Sharon.

Back to Red.

Now Red, keep your cool - she's just doing her job.

Red glares as he pushes past her.

She yells at him as he heads for the elevator.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
I'm not bailing your sorry ass out of jail again.

She smiles and winks at Sharon, who has come to the door.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
He gets a little agitated sometimes.

They leave to follow Red, who has already gone down in the elevator.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Marcie Jones waits patiently while a small FILM CREW stands nearby, waiting for instructions. Red approaches, obviously trying to keep control of his feelings.

RED

Marcie, what's with the crew? I still don't have a comment on Reynolds.

MARCIE

Yeah I know, that's old news now. I'm working on another story - about drug addiction in older players. It's actually a featurette for ESPN. I've gotten plenty of input on the down side, but nothing on the positive side, and you know I like to be balanced.

She gives him her most sincere smile, but it doesn't put him at ease. He doesn't notice that Sharon and La Ticia have come up behind him.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I heard that you've found a way out. Acupuncture and yoga. Can I get you to talk about it?

Sharon is almost as surprised by the question as Red is. She looks cautiously hopeful. But he automatically, instinctively, goes into his macho mode.

RED

Me? Oh no, I don't know who told you that but don't believe everything you hear. I'd never do that stuff.

Sharon, stunned, tries to hide the hurt as she rushes for the door.

By the time Red notices her, Sharon is almost out the front door. He watches her leave, not realizing that she overheard his comment. La Tisha has followed all of this and shakes her head, sadly.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Red sits alone and watches Sports Center. He's not really paying attention. He tries to call Sharon, but she doesn't answer. He doesn't leave a message.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Red is at the counter and sees Abby come in. He looks around for Sharon, but she's not there. Abby hesitantly comes up to him.

ABBY

My mom asked me to give you this.

She hands him a note and then quickly heads for the basement.

Red opens the note and reads.

SHARON (V.O.)

Red, I think it is best if I don't treat you any more. I also ask that you do not come to my classes. I will finish the current sessions and then leave. I'm sure you can find another teacher. Sharon.

Red doesn't know what to make of this.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, CLASSROOM - DAY

Sharon teaches the tai chi class, and Red is there. It is obviously affecting her concentration. She would love to cancel but can't do that to her students. She's angry that he didn't heed her request.

LATER. The class is over. Red waits, then comes to her.

RED

Can we please talk?

SHARON

I thought my note was clear.

RED

Except for why?

SHARON

I really don't want to get into it.
It's better this way.

Her tone and body language make it very clear that she doesn't want to talk. He's not always sensitive to those things, but he gets this. He watches as she finishes packing her things and leaves.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Red enters, ready to swim. He starts to approach Abby but she is involved in an intense conversation with Brad and purposefully doesn't acknowledge him. Red hesitates and then starts to swim.

BRAD

The coach checked on your
application and said it looks good.
He confirmed that he could offer
you a full scholarship.

He tries a little humor to relax her.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Assuming you make the team.

He's rewarded with a half smile, which he gladly accepts.

LATER. Brad's gone as Red gets out of the pool and stands next to Abby. He's going to stand there until she talks to him. Finally she does.

ABBY

Red.

RED

Please Abby I need to know what's
going on with your mother.

ABBY

And you're going to harass me until
I tell you?

RED

I'm not harassing you.

Her look is intense, but not angry.

ABBY

No. No, you're not.

Listen Red I like you, mom likes
you, but you two are just too
different. She's not as strong as
she appears. She's been through a
hell of a lot and just wants to be
left alone.

RED

The reporter called me last night and wanted my comment on information she had found on your mother - a drug conviction.

Abby is angry but doesn't really want to talk about it. Then she changes her mind, feeling that he needs to know.

ABBY

When I as seven, she married this doctor. I'm not sure she really loved him, but all was good for a few years until he got her hooked on cocaine.

Red is stunned.

ABBY (CONT'D)

He was a small-time dealer and also sold prescription drugs he took from the hospital. When she tried to quit, he got angry and set her up, got her arrested.

RED

My god, that's awful. What happened?

ABBY

She was devastated - her dad died thinking she was a drug dealer. Finally, the court dropped the major drug trafficking charge for lack of evidence, but convicted her of a lesser charge, put her on probation.

She couldn't face anyone, so we went to India to an ashram where she rehabbed, and then we went to China.

Abby fights the emotion, the tears.

RED

That's unbelievable.

ABBY

We came home a few months ago for her to get established in her practice, but now...

We never should have left China.

(MORE)

ABBY (CONT'D)
At least there people appreciate
what she can do.

The last is a direct dig at him, but he doesn't get it and she knows it. She shakes her head at how clueless he is.

ABBY (CONT'D)
So do us a favor and just leave her
alone.

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Red sits alone with his beer. He hasn't shaved in a couple of days. He sees JJ, the trainer, and quickly gets up. As he moves to meet JJ, it's obvious that a lot of Red's pain has come back. JJ slips him two pill bottles in exchange for a wad of cash. Red immediately takes a couple of pills.

LATER. Red drinks with Curly and some others. He's obviously depressed and drunk.

INT. RED'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An NFL game is on the television and the volume is turned up loud. The room is a disaster - trash (empty pizza boxes, fast food containers, beer bottles) strewn everywhere.

Red reclines on the couch, and he looks terrible - totally defeated and in pain.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, OFFICE - DAY

Red sleeps at his desk. Papers are scattered across the desk and on the floor.

La Ticia stands in the doorway, shakes her head.

LA TICIA
Red.

She has to repeat it several times before he responds.

RED
Tish.

LA TICIA
You've looked better.

He groans.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
You want to talk?

RED
No.

LA TICIA
She's been worried about you.

He doesn't care, or so he tells himself.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
You really are a clueless bastard
when it comes to women.

He knows that.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
Do you have any idea why she's
upset with you?

He shakes his head.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
After all the good things that her
treatments did for you, mister
troglodyte-cave-man can't
acknowledge that you're getting
help from a woman, doing some
different kind of thing, not
considered macho.

This is a revelation for him.

RED
Is that really it? That I denied
having acupuncture. That's all? I
don't understand.

LA TICIA
That's for damn sure. But the main
thing is what're you going to do
about it?

A little bit of life comes back onto his face.

RED
Is she around?

LA TICIA
No, she had an appointment.

RED
Do you have a number for Marcie
Jones?

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Sharon comes in and nods to La Ticia.

LA TICIA
I've got some messages for you.

SHARON
Oh? From students?

LA TICIA
No, these are for acupuncture
appointments. They didn't have your
number but knew you worked here.

She's very surprised.

SHARON
How many?

La Ticia smiles.

LA TICIA
Maybe twenty, thirty.

SHARON
How did they...

She sees the smile on La Ticia's face and begins to put it
together.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Let me guess, all retired ball
players.

LA TICIA
No.

La Ticia plays it for the moment, the effect.

LA TICIA (CONT'D)
Not all retired, some still
playing.

La Ticia hands her a copy of the sports section of the
Washington Post that has a front page article by Marcie Jones
about the positive effects that acupuncture, yoga, and tai
chi have had on Red. There is a picture of Red and his very
positive quote - "these things have turned my life around".

SHARON
Is he around?

LA TICIA
I think he's in the pool.

La Ticia watches Sharon head for the basement and smiles, a hopeful smile.

INT. ATHLETIC SUPPORTER, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Red has shaved and looks better. The exercise is doing him some good. Abby works on her drawings. Sharon comes in, nods to Abby and watches Red. After a while he notices her, stops and swims over.

RED
Hi.

SHARON
Hi. Thank you for what you said.

RED
I meant every word, and I think you should charge me more for my next treatment.

SHARON
What makes you think there will be one?

RED
I really need it, I know that. And you're too kind of a person to let me suffer.

He's pushing some of the right buttons, and she relaxes a little.

He smiles and doesn't want to press his luck, so he goes back to his swimming.

She looks over at Abby, who has been listening, and now gives her an encouraging smile.

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

MONTAGE of shots of Sharon with different PATIENTS, including Curly. There are a lot of them over several days.

Sharon has finished with a HIGH SCHOOL PATIENT and talks to his MOTHER.

MOTHER

This time is perfect, after school.
How about Thursday?

Sharon looks at an old appointment book, which is full of names.

SHARON

I can't do four but I could do
five.

The Mother agrees and leaves with her son. Sharon closes the door and collapses on the couch - she's tired and looks like she could easily fall asleep. She doesn't really want to answer the KNOCK on the door. She quickly looks at the appointment book, shakes her head - no one is scheduled. The KNOCK repeats, and she reluctantly opens the door to see Red.

RED

Hi.

SHARON

Hi.

RED

I know I don't have an appointment
but I really need... you.

She gives him a long, careful look. Long enough that he begins to fidget and look worried. Then she embraces him and lays her head on his shoulder.

SHARON

I need you too.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN

INT. SHARON'S APARTMENT, ABBY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Abby sits on the floor next to her packed suitcases. She's not unhappy but troubled. Sharon enters, looks at her, then sits next to her. They're quiet for a moment.

SHARON

I'm very proud of you, it's a big
step, going back to college. Don't
worry, you'll do fine. And you're
only a few hours away.

ABBY

That's not what I'm worried about.

Sharon gets it.

SHARON

Becky?

Abby nods.

SHARON (CONT'D)

She'll be okay. I'm sure she understands.

Abby shrugs her shoulders, she's not sure about that at all.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I know you care about her, but you're not her mother, you don't have that responsibility. You'll have your own one day.

Abby smiles at her mother. She knows Sharon means well for a clueless adult.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHARON'S OFFICE - DAY

The new acupuncture office is small but bright and decorated with oriental prints and several of Red's photographs. A RECEPTIONIST sits behind a desk and greets a PATIENT. Sharon emerges from one of two small rooms, greets the Patient, and ushers him into the other room. Just as they go into that room, another PATIENT(2) comes out of the other room, and goes to book her next appointment.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Red and Sharon stand in front of a JUDGE. Abby, Eunice, Laticia, Kim, and Curly stand and watch.

JUDGE

By the authority of the District of Columbia, I now pronounce you husband and wife. Congratulations.

Sharon and Red kiss as the others smile and clap quietly.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

It's late winter (February) on the college campus. A lot of COLLEGE STUDENTS, PARENTS, and SPECTATORS are headed into the aquatic center. The digital sign reads: NCAA Regional Swim Meet.

Red can be seen hurrying through the crowd. He's late.

INT. COLLEGE AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

The meet is underway. Hundreds of SWIMMERS, all in their college swim suits, mill around, talk to COACHES, warmup in the lap pool, and get ready for their race in the 25 meter competition pool.

In the stands, Red looks for Sharon. It's a big crowd.

SWIM ANNOUNCER-TWO (V.O.)
Event 18 women's 400 meter
freestyle, heat three of three.

Abby, wearing a knee-skin swimsuit for the University of Pittsburgh, stands on the starting block in lane five. Her focus is completely on the water, the race. The STARTER starts the race and Abby gets a great jump and quickly goes out to the lead. This is good competition, and she loves it. They push her as she comes to the first turn. Her turn is not as good as the others, and she loses her lead.

Sharon stands with Red and cheers but looks apprehensive - parental concern. Red smiles - he knows Abby has this.

By the next turn Abby has drawn even. This time her turn is great, and her push off the wall puts her in the lead for good. Brad stands by the side of the pool shouting.

Abby wins by a second and a half. The swimmers congratulate each other before getting out of the pool. Brad is there and gives her an enthusiastic high-five. He wants to hug her but this isn't the place.

INT. COLLEGE AQUATIC CENTER, LOBBY - DAY

Parents and Swimmers meet, talk, and head out. Red stands, looking around for Abby. She comes up the stairs from the locker room and sees him. A big smile, tempered by not seeing her mom.

ABBY
Hi Red, where's mom?

RED
You were terrific, a national
qualifier, wow.

Abby is proud but tries to hold on to her natural modesty.
She continues to look around for her mother.

RED (CONT'D)
She's over there with someone else
who's eager to see you.

Abby is happy and also confused.

He takes her arm and guides her to a quieter area of the
lobby, where Sharon sits with Becky. When Becky sees Abby she
leaps up, races to her, and hugs her. Abby is stunned.

ABBY
Becky. What, what are you doing
here?

Becky is too excited to talk. Red puts his arm around Sharon.

SHARON
She wanted to see her big sister
swim.

Abby doesn't compute this for a moment, then starts to, but
it's too crazy to believe.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Red and I adopted her. It became
official this week. We didn't want
to say anything until it actually
happened.

They all rush into a big, old fashioned, family hug.

FADE OUT.